

Faces of War

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Summary: [Complete!] Shortly after the rise of the Golden Sun, Dodonpa, leader of Lunpa, is released from his imprisonment. Unfortunately, he hasn't improved his attitude any. What happens to the Adepts when he declares war on those who imprisoned him before? R&R!

***Chapter 1*: Cloudy Horizons**

Contains some TLA spoilers...read at your own risk!

Chapter 1

Cloudy Horizons

Though he pictured himself in many job possibilities as a child, Isaac of Vale was now performing one task in particular that he never thought he would be forced into being: a pack mule.

Well, at least he wasn't alone. Beside him, Gareth was as loaded with boxes as he was. The source for the weight lifting was to be seen ahead.

"Hey, you two, hurry up, would you? I'm an old man, I don't really have that much time left, you know!" Kraden, of course. The old alchemy "student", as he referred to himself, was performing some experiments on the peak of Mount Aleph and temporarily relocating there from his house at the base of the mountain in Vale. So, of course, this meant he had to bring everything with him. And that meant getting Isaac and Gareth to work for him.

"It's easy for you to say, Kraden," responded Gareth. "You aren't bogged down with boxes like these. What's in these things anyway? They weigh a ton!" Isaac stopped to look at the labels on the side of Gareth's boxes.

"They all say 'Phoenix Feathers', Garet. How heavy can they be?"

"Very!"

"Just hurry it up," said Kraden quickening his own pace. As much as they respected their mentor, Kraden had a certain ability to get on the nerves of his proteges, much to their dismay.

"So why can't we use Psynergy again? I would love to Move these boxes without breaking my spine..." Garet whined.

"Kraden said the materials in the boxes had a certain explosive tendency when it came to having Psynergy used on them." Isaac replied.

"Well, at least if it's in a million pieces, it can't be that heavy!" Garet joked. Isaac rolled his eyes. Even after all their adventures, Garet still knew how to get Isaac to relax. And their adventures were no small task either. Isaac had taken Garet, their Jupiter Adept friend Ivan and the kind-hearted healer Mia on an adventure that took them across whole continents, stretching from the deserts of Suhalla to the frozen village of Prox, and exploring all four lighthouses. They ran into their share of enemies: Saturos and Menardi of the Fire Clan, whom they defeated atop the Venus Lighthouse Aerie; Karst and Agatio of the Fire Clan, who they managed to escape the wrath of thanks to their soon-to-be-teammates Felix, Jenna, Sheba and Picard; even the ghost of a very nasty pirate named Deadbeard. It was an adventure that took nearly two years, and it was with mixed emotions it ended merely a month ago. Isaac, Garet, Felix and Jenna returned to Vale, homesick (though they would never admit it). Mia returned to Imil to return to her healing duties and to check up on Justin and Megan, her healer proteges. Ivan

took Sheba to see Master Hama at Lama Temple, and Picard followed them, curious as to the wonders of this continent. Isaac smiled while remembering his friends, then quickly refocused on the task at hand as the boxes began to spill from his grip.

"You doin' OK there, Isaac?" inquired Gareth, noting his friend's wobble.

'Yeah, no problem," he replied.

The pair reached the top of the mountain with the final load sometime before sunset. Sol setting off in the distance over the mountains was a sight to behold. It made Isaac remember Vale as it used to be, before the rising of the Golden Sun, onset by the lighting of the Mars Lighthouse. Vale itself was destroyed in the process, but the villagers managed to evacuate in time and relocated a little farther away, still watching over Mount Aleph, but now watching over the Golden Sun as well. This new addition to watch over was proving to be more and more difficult, as people as far away as Imil could see the light set off by it.

Isaac and Gareth left Kraden to his own devices, and reached Vale just as Luna took to the sky. They soon ran into Jenna near the city limits, who was returning from a shopping trip in Vault.

"Hey, guys!" she called. "How was your day?"

"Oh, lovely," replied Gareth. "Just wonderful. Who wouldn't want to carry boxes for a grumpy old man all day?" Jenna laughed.

"You've been carrying stuff all day?" she inquired. Gareth nodded. "Well, here, you can carry my stuff. I wouldn't want

to ruin your day by not letting you carry something." She thrust the packages into Gareth's arms and he sighed.

"At this rate, someone's going to have to carry me."

After the three had long since separated, Isaac lay awake in his bed. It was sometime after midnight, and Isaac was terribly bored. He looked around his room, not exactly small, but still big enough for him. It was dark in the room as there were no lit objects outside anymore, save Luna, and even that wasn't much. Still, Isaac thought, it's more light than we had on our quest...

Isaac thought back to the old days of adventuring, when the four of them would stay up late, talking, swapping stories, and just growing closer as a team. They were nearly an unbeatable combination, and no one on the face of Angara could deny it. Isaac was not only a contributor to saving the world, but he was also Colosso Champion. There was no doubt that Isaac was one of the strongest fighters ever. Well, Gareth would always joke about how he could win in a battle between them, and Ivan would say how he could just search Isaac's mind and soul for a weakness and win, and Mia...actually, Mia always spoke quite warmly of him. Isaac pondered that as sleep finally overtook him.

Isaac awoke in the morning to the full rays of Sol shining through his window. He pulled himself out of bed, put on his tunic, yellow scarf, and styled his hair up as normal, and then grabbed a bite of breakfast before heading out.

"Good morning, Gareth!" he called, noticing Gareth at the end of his walkway. "How's it going?"

"Not bad," he replied, though somewhat emotionlessly. Isaac paused, noting that Gareth was hiding something. "It was a quiet night," Gareth continued, rambling now. "Nothing unusual happened. Not at all." Isaac stopped and carefully chose his words before answering.

"OK, what happened?" Gareth looked at him in awe.

"How did you know?" he wondered aloud.

"It's not hard when you draw attention to the typical normalcy of a night." Gareth paused to consider what he had said, and promptly slapped his forehead.

"One day I will learn how to get things past you." he said, realizing his best friend knew him too well to be fooled by mere words of assurance.

"So what's up?" Isaac asked. Gareth was about to answer when Felix passed by. Gareth gave Isaac a subtle head shake "No", and Isaac decided not to press it until after Felix left. "Hey, Felix," he said. Felix gave him a polite nod before continuing on his way.

"You know," Gareth said, musing over Felix's cold appearance, 'you'd think that walking across the world would open his eyes a little...but he's just as cold as ever!"

"Yeah, well, some people are just like that," said Isaac. "Now, you were saying?"

"Oh," Gareth said, snapping his mind back to attention. "This is really tricky to explain, and it could change a lot of things around here." Isaac's stomach took a nosedive, and he swallowed before listening to what Gareth had to say.

"What's going on?"

"Do you remember when Dodonpa captured Master Hammet? And we had to rescue him and we left Dodonpa there in that prison for awhile?" Gareth said, speaking slowly.

"Yeah, sure. We got Hammet out and Dodonpa had to think a few things over under his father's supervision. Donpa was watching him to make sure that nothing would happen." Isaac recalled that well.

"Yeah, well, since my dad's Mayor of Vale he hears news from outside of town, and...well, Donpa died. And that means there was no one to stop Dodonpa from getting out of that cell, and now he's back in charge of Lunpa," Gareth said.

"OK...but, how does that affect us?" Isaac wondered. Gareth frowned, gathered his courage and spoke what he wanted to say in one quick sentence.

"Dodonpa...declared war on Kalay and Master Hammet," he said.

"You're joking?!" Isaac burst. "He would do something so foolish?!"

"He would...and will, and it's not just because of him. It's because we were involved, too. He wants us and Hammet." replied Gareth.

"Is there any way we can stop him?" Isaac asked. Gareth chuckled weakly.

"My friend...we may be adepts, we may have saved the world, and you may be Colosso Champion, but this war is already on, and there's nothing two guys with an agenda can do about it." Gareth's words stung Isaac deeply. In all his trials and adventures, Isaac was the leader; he was in charge. Here arose a situation where he wasn't in control at

all...and it was partially caused by him! There was nothing he could do anymore. Gareth kept his eyes focused on Isaac. 'There's gonna be a town meeting tonight. Dad's gonna call it. Just wait until tonight and we'll see what we'll do, OK?' Isaac barely heard the question.

"Yeah...yeah, sure," he mumbled.

"Isaac, promise me you won't do something stupid before the village decides what it's going to do," Gareth pressed.

"I can't promise...but I'll try."

The day went by faster than any in Isaac's life, and soon the meeting arose. However, he did not attend. Instead, he climbed a nearby rooftop, where he could just listen. He saw the look of worry on Gareth's face when he realized Isaac wasn't there, but Isaac didn't care at this point. He was too deep in emotion to care. Eventually, the Mayor took the Pedestal.

"Attention! Attention, please!" he called. "This meeting has been called because this town needs to decide upon a course of action."

"Regarding what?" called Kyle from the crowd.

"Regarding the impending danger over this region. In two days, Lunpa under Dodonpa will declare war with Kalay and Master Hammet." A visible gasp took the crowd. They were shocked at this announcement. Many feared for the break of peace over the land, but more feared for the safety of Master Hammet. Everyone who had ever visited Kalay, and that was a lot of them, just for the sheer amount of products, had met Hammet, and found a kind man who they had come to

respect tremendously. The news that he might be in danger was painful for many of them.

Isaac, however, noticed that the Mayor did not mention that the war was also partially to find himself and Garet. He supposed that the detail was too unimportant to mention right now. After all, when faced with the threat of a war affecting hundreds upon thousands, who really cared about just four other people?

"We have to help Hammet!" called a woman from the crowd.

"No, we must protect Mount Aleph and the Golden Sun!" called another.

"Can we stop the war?" asked Kyle.

"Unfortunately, no," said the Mayor. "The decision has gone ahead. This meeting is solely to decide what we shall do about this. Isolate ourselves here and protect Mount Aleph, or get involved."

"What are your thoughts, Mayor?" asked Dora.

"I believe," he said solemnly, "that the best course of action is to stay isolated. Not only does that prevent the world from learning of Alchemy and Adepts such as ourselves, but we are needed here to protect Mount Aleph and the Golden Sun. As much as I hate to say it, I believe we must stay here." After he spoke, silence ensued. Eventually, Kyle spoke again.

"Then I propose that we stay," he sighed. "As much as I want to stop this, the Mayor is right. We cannot risk it." The other villagers sighed and concurred, one by one, all following the path chosen by their leader.

"Then," said the Mayor, "the matter is settled. You may all go home now. Thank you for your time." Isaac was the first one gone, bouncing off the rooftops and all the way home. Gareth, not knowing where Isaac was, rose and moved as quickly as possible toward Isaac's house. Most stayed to talk for awhile amongst themselves, unable to accept what they had heard here.

Isaac entered his room, and pulled out a chest from under his bed. In it was his trusted equipment; the items that had saved his life many times over: the Sol Blade, Asura's Armour, and a Warrior's Helm. He quickly donned the equipment, hoping to leave Vale as silently as possible. He quickly left a note for his family and friends on the mantle, saying he was leaving for Kalay to help Master Hammet. He turned to head for the door, when, to no surprise to him, he found Gareth in the doorway.

"Where are you going, Isaac?" Gareth asked, then stopped himself. "I don't even need to ask, do I?" Isaac shook his head.

"I will not wait here as a war rages outside. I'm going to stop Dodonpa from killing as many people as I can." Gareth saw the resolve in Isaac's eyes and sighed. There would be no stopping him now. So many people had seen the righteousness and truth in Isaac's eyes on their journey, and now, finally, Gareth saw it for himself. He relented.

"Very well. You can go, but I'm going with you!" he said.

"You aren't ready yet," Isaac countered. "I am. I'll leave now, and meet you in Kalay when you get there."

"Fine," Gareth said. "I suppose time is of the essence...but when I come, I'm bringing Jenna and Felix." Isaac smiled inwardly.

"Yeah, count on you to bring Jenna..." he smiled.

"What was that?!" Gareth blushed.

"Oh, nothing," Isaac smirked. Gareth smiled.

"Yeah, well, I just can't wait until you get to see Mia again." Isaac stumbled mentally. So maybe there was something there...?

"Whatever. I've got to go. I'll see you in Kalay." Isaac headed out the door, past Gareth. As he was just past him, Gareth turned and put his hand on Isaac's shoulder.

"Isaac."

"Yeah?"

"...Stay alive, bro."

"You too, man. You too."

That wasn't that bad, was it?

(Dew): That was terrible.

Oh, come on!

(Dew): I speak the truth.

Yeah, but no one ever listens to you anyway...

(Dew): ...*hitting Omniflyer with a table leg*

YOW! Where'd you get the table leg from?

(Dew): A table.

-_-* It's gonna be one of those days... Anyway, please leave a review on your way out!

***Chapter 2*: Mask of Deceit**

Chapter 2 is finally done (despite the incredible number of reviews I got...)!

(Dew): And it took way too long.

Oh, come on. It only took a couple of days!

(Dew): Still too long.

-.-* Is there any way I can win...?

(Dew): No.

I thought as much...

Disclaimer: I'm sorry to disappoint all of you, but I don't own Golden Sun! (sob)

Chapter Two

Mask of Deceit

"Stay alive."

That was the last thing Garet had said to him as he silently made his way out of Vale and onward to Kalay. The crisp midnight air filled his lungs as he passed through the fields that separated Vale and Kalay. Eventually, worn by fatigue, he set up camp and slept for a few hours until the break of Sol.

Isaac was still tired, but he knew that time was definitely of the essence. So, still tired, he broke camp and forced himself onward. He passed great fields and rivers, but the greatest sight that he came across was an old friend that appeared in a flash of gold.

"Flint!" said Isaac in surprise. To meet his old travelling companion again was a real joy. Flint danced around in the air, showing off a little for his ground-bound friend. To meet djinn on the road was a real gift, as djinn held untold power. When a djinni joined with a person, that person would experience a surge of power. That power resulted in additional strength, speed and defensive ability, not to mention a wealth of new psynergies.

"Hey, Isaac! How's the old warrior?" he asked cheerfully. The smile faded from Isaac's face. Apparently the Venus Djinn had no inkling as to future events. But then, he expected only the Jupiter Djinn would, with their prediction abilities.

"Times are rough, Flint, and I don't know what to do about it," replied Isaac. The events of the coming days were definitely not the most pleasurable to discuss, but Isaac felt compelled to mention them to everyone he passed, human or not. So, Isaac, still walking toward Kalay with Flint following, told him of the events of the preceding day, and the ramifications on the lives of him and the nearby towns.

When Isaac had finished, Sol was at midday, and Isaac again quickened his pace. Flint was uncharacteristically quiet. After a pause to understand everything he had been told, he decided to help Isaac again.

"Well, I'll tell you what I'll do, Isaac. I'll get all the djinn I can find again; our old allies. I'll tell them all to converge on Kalay and Set themselves to you and the others when they arrive. We may not help that much, but, hey, every little bit, huh?" Flint smiled.

"Yeah, sure. Thank you, Flint," Isaac said. And with that, Flint was gone, leaving Isaac alone to his thoughts again.

The rest of the day passed by uneventfully. Isaac rested by his campfire that night, and by the following morning, he could already see the faint outline of Kalay on the horizon. It wasn't long before he had entered the gates, and found, much to his dismay, a certain quiet panic among the populace. Isaac quickly headed for the palace, where he was sure he would find Master Hammet.

Master Hammet's palace was revered among people as one of the greatest landmarks on Angara. The palace was made of stone, but decorated by plating of silver and gold. Few ever entered the building, but those that did were thrown back by the beauty of the interior. Crimson silks and fine chinas adorned the inside, creating a look comparable only to the outside of the building itself. Isaac found the palace and climbed the hill on which it stood without incident. The soldier atop the hill guarding the doors was a little sceptical about letting him in, however.

"Halt! State your business," declared the guard. Apparently, the threat of war had caused Master Hammet to increase his

security. It made Isaac wonder why guards weren't present at the front gate.

"My name is Isaac of Vale. I have come to see Master Hammet about some rather...pressing issues," Isaac stated carefully. He didn't want to risk upsetting the guard, especially not now.

"The issues you speak of are of no concern to the general public," the guard stated. "Master Hammet can take care of this by himself. There is no need to a child such as yourself to get involved."

Child? Isaac thought. A twinge of anger ran through Isaac, but he simply suppressed it. "I'm sorry, sir, but I cannot leave here without seeing Master Hammet."

"And I can't let you see Master Hammet. Now get out of here or I'll have you thrown in jail."

"On what charge?" Isaac asked.

"Attempted assassination," replied the guard. Isaac couldn't believe it. Not only would they not let him in, but they thought that he was on Dodonpa's side! Isaac was about to interrupt when a voice called out from behind him.

"Allow us to see Master Hammet, please." The voice was familiar, and Isaac placed it just as he turned around. "Ivan! Sheba!" he said. They turned to look at him, and smiled as they recognized one of their greatest friends.

"Isaac! What are you doing here?" Ivan asked.

"I didn't expect you here so early," Sheba stated. Isaac realized his arrival here was not hidden, as the pair of Jupiter Adepts had predicted it perfectly, if not a little later.

"Well, I like to surprise people," said Isaac with a smile. "Do you think you can get me to see Master Hammet?"

"Of course," Ivan stated, walking forward to the guards.
"Allow us entry."

"I'm afraid I cannot do that if you don't give me identification," the guard replied. Sheba suppressed a laugh.

"Can't you tell it's Ivan?" she wondered. Guards could be so slow sometimes. The guard took a look at him and immediately became a lot more cooperative.

"Oh, Lord Ivan! Forgive me, I didn't recognize you after all your adventures," the guard offered.

"That's all right," Ivan responded. "Just allow me entry."

"At once," the guard replied. He opened the door and allowed Ivan in. Just as Sheba was about to cross the threshold with Isaac behind her, however, the guards blocked them from entering.

"What are you doing?" Isaac asked. The guard frowned at him.

"I said Lord Ivan may enter. You two, however, are obviously of low status and are not allowed to enter." Sheba frowned heavily at this, and Ivan turned on the guard.

"That's enough!" he called. "These two are with me, and if you have a problem with that, I would advise you to search for a new line of work. Is that understood?" Ivan rounded on him. The guard shrunk from him.

"Y-yessir. You may enter," he said to Isaac and Sheba. Isaac felt like the guard was hiding something, but ignored it. He

decided to leave the thinking to the pair of Jupiter Adepts in front of him.

"Thank you," Isaac said. Sheba said nothing, but rather fumed. Eventually she brightened up, and Isaac assumed that she and Ivan were speaking telepathically with Mind Read. After a few minutes of walking without finding Master Hammet, Ivan and Sheba both stared seriously at Isaac.

"Aren't you going to answer?" Sheba asked him curiously.

"Answer what?" he replied. Ivan furrowed his brow.

"The question I asked you," Ivan replied.

"I didn't hear any question," Isaac said. He frowned for a moment, and then realized that the Jupiter Adepts had forgotten about his inability to Mind Read. "I think you two have spent so long talking mind-to-mind you've forgotten that not all of us can do that," Isaac laughed. The pair of them blushed a little, realizing their folly.

"Sorry about that, Isaac," Ivan said meekly. "We've spent the last month at Lama Temple, speaking with pretty much only our minds." Sheba nodded.

"Yes, it's a little tricky to get both methods working at the same time. You know, mind and mouth." She blushed a little more. Neither of them could believe that they had forgotten about this. They usually never looked over such a simple thing. Isaac laughed.

"That's OK," Isaac said. "There's nothing wrong with expanding your abilities." Isaac knew what it felt like to be unable to cast something powerful and final. It had taken him until he reached the Mars Lighthouse Aerie at the end of their journey to cast Grand Gaia, his best technique.

"So," said Ivan, remembering to speak verbally now, "where do you think Master Hammet is?" The tone of the conversation changed. Isaac could sense Ivan's concern, but also that he wanted the truth and not a tale just to please him.

"I hope here. Because if he's not here," Isaac stated bitterly, "then this war is already off to the wrong start."

It didn't take Ivan long to start panicking. Or at least, panicking as much as a Jupiter Adept would allow himself to. Sheba calmed him down a little, but Ivan was still very uneasy after they had searched the entire town to no avail. They returned to Master Hammet's palace and rested in the main hall, adorned by silk red fabric and fine tables and china.

"What if he's already been taken to Lunpa? Dodonpa could have him!" Ivan said, his nervousness sounding in his voice.

"I don't think he's been taken yet," Isaac stated. "Dodonpa only just officially declared war tonight. There's no way he could have gotten to Master Hammet yet."

"Don't worry, Ivan," Sheba said comfortingly. "Isaac's right, I'm sure Master Hammet's fine. And even if he is captured, you rescued him once before, haven't you?" Ivan brightened up a little at this, but still seemed nervous for the rest of the night. They decided to retire here as opposed to the inn. After all, with Ivan here, it was as good as their home. Ivan stayed up late in bed, tossing and turning, worried for his adopted father. Finally, after midnight, Ivan's fatigue finally took him over, and he allowed sleep to envelop him.

The morning arrived soon, and the trio met in the dining hall. Even though Master Hammet hadn't yet shown up, the servants were still there, and Ivan still swung some weight, so Isaac and Sheba were treated quite nicely. They were in the middle of a breakfast fit for a king when a knock sounded from the door. The guard was arguing with somebody, and a familiar voice sounded from the main hall.

"You can let us in!"

"I'm sorry, sir, but no one enters without permission from Master Hammet himself," the guard stated. He stood between the people at the door and the main entrance. Isaac came up behind the guard, flanked by Ivan and Sheba.

"You let me in without Master Hammet's consent," Isaac said. He turned to look at the guests, and saw that Gareth had finally caught up to him, followed by Jenna and Felix

"Isaac!" Gareth said in surprise. "How did you get here?"

"He knows people," Ivan smirked. Gareth and Jenna widened their eyes in surprise at seeing the two Jupiter Adepts behind Isaac.

"Ivan, Sheba! It's good to see you two again!" Jenna exclaimed. Felix retained his neutral expression at seeing the two old allies again. Ivan turned his attention to the guard that was keeping the trio from entering.

"You may let them in, now, please," Ivan said. The guard turned to face Ivan.

"I will not let them go," the guard stated. Ivan turned stared at the guard.

"You what?" Ivan asked.

"I will not let any of you leave," the guard laughed. It was a cold laugh that none of them expected to come from a normal human guard. "You will all die here and now."

"Excuse me?" Gareth mocked. "How do you expect to beat us? The only way you would stand a chance is if you weren't a lowly human soldier, which, I might add, you are. You aren't some powerful creature that can use or even copy our power." Gareth's Mars temper was rising, but still the guard laughed.

"Copy, you say? Not copy, Gareth, Defender of Mars," he said, and Gareth stumbled at hearing his name. "Not copy, but mimic..." And in a brilliant flash of light, the guard disappeared, and the most powerful and devious Mimic any of them had ever seen was standing before them. With one fast move, the human-shaped mimic (Isaac made a mental note that not all Mimics had to be shaped like treasure chests) lunged at Gareth, and knocked him off his feet before he could even raise his sword.

Felix drew his sword and began slashing at the Mimic, but for every attack Felix made, the Mimic had the perfect counter. Felix soon realized that when Mimics weren't in the form of a treasure chest, but rather a two-legged creature, they had access to the power and speed that the form could possess. No longer in a cramped, boxlike body, this Mimic was fast, powerful and deadly.

Isaac was still unarmed, having left his sword inside. Not letting his own lack of foresight hinder him, he raised his hands to the sky, and cast Ragnarok. A giant sword of light cut through the Mimic. But when the dust cleared, the Mimic was still standing and charging toward Isaac, sword extended, ready to extract revenge for the apparently painful attack. Isaac, still unarmed, could do nothing to

block as the sword point was aimed at his uncovered neck and thrust forward.

(Dew):

^ _ ^
—

(Dew): Is that the best place you can end this?

Sure. Why not?

(Dew): *hitting Omniflyer with a fridge door handle*

OW. What is with you and the furniture/appliance stuff?

(Dew): They're hard and painful.

With a muse like you, who needs people to flame this? Why am I even going to ASK for reviews?

(Dew:) Because you can't write for beans and you need the reviews to tell you exactly where you went wrong.

....oh, right. So please review, everybody!

***Chapter 3*: Facing the Future**

And here's Chapter 3! I know you've all been waiting for this! ^_^

(Dew): Highly unlikely.

Are you ever going to be helpful to me?

(Dew): Highly unlikely. Hey, why wasn't I in the last chapter? I mean, you put Flint in, but no me!

Give me one good reason to put you in after the table leg and the fridge door handle.

(Dew): This shower curtain rod.

Interesting.....

Disclaimer: I don't own Golden Sun (huge surprise!)

Chapter Three

Facing the Future

Isaac saw the blade tip turn to face his throat. He also saw the sword be thrust forward to impale him, and he saw how he was helpless against this super-powered, transformed Mimic.

The most important thing he saw, however, was the Mimic stop the sword, its tip resting on his throat. The Mimic spoke in a cold tone, and it sent a shiver down the spine of all present when he rasped out his statement.

"So, the hero, Isaac of Vale, Champion of Colosso and Defender of Venus is stopped by a mere Mimic." He shook his head. "What a shame." Isaac spoke, ignoring the steel poised to extinguish his life.

"What do you want?" Isaac questioned. The Mimic grinned a cold grin, having nothing to fear from the once proud heroes.

"You are trying to interfere in something you are too late to prevent. Stop now," the Mimic said, his voice barely over a whisper.

"What do you mean, 'too late to prevent'? Do you mean..." Isaac began, but the Mimic cut him off.

"Stop asking questions. My Master, King Dodonpa..." (Isaac frowned here. Apparently the stay in prison had done nothing to halt Dodonpa's ego) "...is engaged in a war with Master Hammet. In all his graciousness, he has decided to spare you so long as you do not interfere. Go home to Vale and leave Hammet to King Dodonpa, or else..." the Mimic let the threat hang.

"Or else what?" Isaac pressed, and the Mimic laughed.

"You can see what else right now, kid," he cackled, gesturing to the sword resting at Isaac's neck.

"Oh, that. Is that all?" Isaac smiled. The Mimic frowned at the insolence of this boy. Surely he knew that he could be killed at any moment?

"I'd like to see you try and get away," the Mimic said, although Sheba picked up a bit of worry in his voice. "Please, show the awesome power of Venus to me!" he laughed, voice dripping sarcasm.

"Fine," Isaac said, and before the Mimic could react, Isaac flipped over backwards, and as his feet passed the sword, he closed his feet around it, and the Mimic felt his grip loosen. Isaac pried the sword from his grip, landed back on his feet and threw it at him. The sword expertly landed in the Mimic's chest, not a fatal wound, but still very painful and distracting. As the Mimic struggled to remove the sword that was piercing him, he didn't notice Isaac raising his hands and calling "Mother Gaia!" With his guard down from the new sword appendage, the Mimic didn't have time to properly defend himself, and was vanquished on the spot.

Ivan looked at him, impressed. "A very nice bit of bluffing, my friend," he said. "That was a dangerous but very effective method to gather information." Sheba nodded.

"Yes, only Ivan and I could see what you were doing," she said. Gareth laughed.

"Oh, come on! I knew what he was doing as soon as he let that point touch his neck." Gareth said proudly. Ivan frowned and cast Mind Read.

"Garet, you didn't know what he was doing until Sheba told you. You couldn't have..." Ivan paused, discovering something new in the recesses of Garet's mind. "...You fell in the river on the way here?" Isaac laughed and Garet blushed.

"Get out of my head, you little midget!" he cried. Everyone laughed except for Garet.

"How do you fall in a river from a straight path?" Ivan asked, winded from laughter, something that isn't usually seen in Jupiter Adepts. Garet didn't reply, but Jenna was laughing terribly hard.

"Well, now that the pleasantries are over with..." Isaac smiled. "Everyone come in, please. We have much to discuss, and not a lot of time."

"So what do we know so far?" asked Felix, sitting comfortably in Master Hammet's guest lounge. The others were all scattered across the room, resting in very fine furniture. Sheba thought a bit and answered.

"Dodonpa is mad. He's declared war on Master Hammet, and if he's heard about Isaac's stunt earlier, he'll be looking for us, too," she reasoned.

"Not you, Sheba. Just Garet, Ivan, Mia and myself," Isaac commented. Jenna, Felix and Sheba weren't with Isaac's party when they freed Master Hammet so long ago, so there was no reason to put any of them in danger. "In fact, you guys can just leave now if you want. This war has nothing to do with you."

"Except for the impact on our home and neighbouring regions," Jenna stated impatiently. "Felix and I are in this war, too, whether you like it or not." Gareth smiled.

"Thanks for the option," he said.

"No problem," Jenna replied, sending him a smile.

"How about you, Sheba?" Ivan asked. "There's no need for you to be here, too." Isaac caught some concern in Ivan's voice, and wasn't surprised when Sheba didn't answer, but merely looked at him. After a few moments, Isaac could have sworn he saw a faint pink tinge in Ivan's cheeks...

"So that's all of us," Isaac said. "But we still need to worry about Mia." (Garet coughed) "She was also with us when we saved Dodonpa, and he'll know where to find her."

"How do you figure?" Jenna asked.

"Mia was a very famous healer before she left with us," Gareth answered. "She had a very widespread reputation, even as far as Bilibin and Lunpa." Ivan nodded.

"People thought she was an angel," he added. Jenna turned to look at him, curious. "Well, I mean, come on! She healed people miraculously, with a soothing blue light she emanated and a little fairy."

"So there's no doubt that Dodonpa knows about her," Isaac concluded.

"So what do we do about it?" Felix asked. Though Felix was very skilled as a leader, he recognized that this dilemma fell more to Isaac as he was the one who had saved Master Hammet in the first place. Isaac was grateful for the opportunity to lead again, not just sit around in Vale.

Though, as always, he wished for better circumstances to do so.

"We split up," Isaac said simply.

"What?!" Gareth cried. "We put all this effort into walking here to meet you and now you want to split up again?"

"Not all of us walked here, Gareth," Jenna said slyly.

"Huh?"

"Some of us were carried halfway here by a river current." Everyone laughed except for Gareth.

"For your information, Jenna, I was carried here two-thirds of the way, not half," he joked. "But that's not the point. This group shouldn't split up, especially with a war going on. I say we all go to Imil to get Mia, and then come back here to help." Isaac smiled, but shook his head sadly.

"No. If we do that, we'll lose too many innocent people in the process. It will take far too long to go to Imil and return and expect help out," he reasoned.

"But if we split up, then we won't be strong enough to do anything here anyway!" Gareth fumed. "There's got to be something we can do. Can't you just send a messenger to Mia and tell her to get here? Carefully?" he added, sensing Isaac's concern.

"No. As bad as splitting up would be, we can't send one person anywhere now. If we told Mia to come alone, she'd be in real trouble, especially with Dodonpa out to find her," Isaac countered.

"As fun as this debate is," Ivan interrupted, "we need to decide what we're going to do. Now, the way I see it, we should head for Vault now."

"Why Vault?" Jenna wondered.

"It's simple," Sheba said. "Vault is between here and Lunpa. The first thing we have to do to reduce casualties is remove the innocents. So we go to Vault and help them evacuate to Bilibin."

"Will that work?" Felix asked. "They have no reason to believe us."

"Well, as long as we have the Colosso Champion with us," Gareth laughed, sending a smile towards Isaac, who blushed. "This'll be a piece of cake."

"Don't underestimate this, Gareth," Ivan warned. "This is a real war. There are thousands of people involved, and we can't afford to be reckless. Every mistake we make is an opportunity for Dodonpa to take advantage of."

"All right, all right," Gareth relented. "Sheesh. Let's go to Vault and see what we can do, all right?" Sheba nodded.

"Ok," she said. "That will be our plan for now."

"For now," Gareth mused. "Don't you hate it when they say 'for now'? I mean, it always sounds like something is about to go wrong..."

It was midday when the party finally left Kalay, still having no idea where Master Hammet was. Ivan wanted to look around once more for him, but in the end, they decided that

wherever he was, it was probably a better place than waiting around at his palace. Ivan was deep in thought as they began walking, and Sheba decided to break his concentration.

'What are you thinking?' she asked him. Speaking mind-to-mind was her favourite way to talk to Ivan. It felt more familiar to do so.

'Oh. I'm just worried about Master Hammet,' said Ivan.

'Liar,' Sheba teased. 'I know you too well to be fooled by that. You're thinking about something else entirely, aren't you?'

'Well, yeah, I guess so,' Ivan admitted.

'Lucky medal for your thoughts,' Sheba pried.

'I was only thinking about that Mimic we ran into earlier,' Ivan said. Sheba furrowed her brow.

'The human one?' she asked.

'It wasn't human,' Ivan said. 'It was similar, and shaped like a human. But it wasn't human.'

'What are you so worried about then?' she wondered. It was very rare that Ivan would be

so worried about something for so long, especially about only one foe in particular. She didn't recall him worrying about Karst or Agatio this much...

'I suppose what bothers me the most about it is...' he paused. Sheba took a guess.

'What he said? How we can't interfere and all that?' Sheba smiled. 'That thing can't do anything to us. Isaac defeated it in one attack.'

'We aren't as strong as Isaac,' Ivan said, though Sheba thought Ivan could give Isaac a good run for his money. 'And it's not what he was saying that's bothering me.'

'Oh, no?' Sheba wondered. 'Then what is bugging you?'

'Well...oh, never mind, it really isn't important,' Ivan said.

'It is to me! If it's bugging you that much, then tell me!' she pried.

'Ok, fine. I'm worried about the fact that the Mimic could take the shape of a human. I mean, all the Mimics we ever came across in all of Weyard were shaped like chests. And that Mimic broke that rule,' Ivan said.

'I don't think you're worried about the Mimic breaking the rule, Ivan,' Sheba commented.

'Huh?'

'I think you're worried about the fact that the Mimic broke your trust. I mean, this Mimic impersonated something that was supposed to stand guard over the only home you've ever known!' she said.

'That's not true! I know I was born in Contigo! That's...'

'That's not your home,' Sheba interrupted. 'That was your birthplace, but your home is where you grew up. And where you grew up was under the care of Master Hammet in Kalay in that palace. And that safety, that comfort was broken by

the Mimic, who deceived even our Jupiter powers and defiled your home.'

'I suppose you're right, Sheba,' Ivan relented. 'Thanks.'

'Anytime, Ivan,' she said cheerfully, happy to have helped her fellow Wind Adept.

'I just wish I could shake this feeling that there was something special about that Mimic other than his strength to change shape,' he thought. 'Something...else.'

Or maybe there is, little Ivan. Vwee-hee-hee-hee-hee!

(Dew): Omniflyer, evil laughs are not supposed to be high-pitched 'vwee-hee-hees'.

Oh, really?

(Dew): Yes. Evil laughs are supposed to be more of a BWAHAHAHAHAHAHA!!!

cringing Geez...where'd you learn to do that?

(Dew): It's a talent! ^_^ All muses are born with the ability to be evil.

How evil is evil?

(Dew): *taking the previously mentioned shower curtain rod and hitting Omniflyer with it*

OW.....you know, you've got to stop hitting me with things like that, or I'm going to be VERY mean in an upcoming chapter.

(Dew): How mean are we talking?

...I'll call him Piers.

(Dew): NOOOOOOOOOO (review, please!)
OOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOO!!

***Chapter 4*: First Blood**

Chapter 4 is here!

(Dew): (unenthusiastically) Yay.

...you know, you're really starting to annoy me, Dew.

(Dew): It's hard work.

Aren't you supposed to like...stop me from being too evil and writing so many cliffs?

(Dew): Oh, yeah. *draws himself up to full height of...what, half a foot?* No cliffhangers in this chapter!!

Or...

(Dew): *Brandishing cabinet door* ...

...I'll take that into account.

To the rest of you, this chapter is the beginning of the war and why I rated this one PG. You have been warned! Also, I think this one's going to be a bit longer than usual.

(Dew): Why, best cliffhanger spot?

whistling

Disclaimer: Ok, some of you may be surprised to find out that I don't own Golden Sun. Amazingly, Camelot does, which means I don't, because my name is not Camelot (although I do know some Cams...)

Chapter Four

First Blood

The threat of war over the land was evident to the six travellers. Every person they passed was either fleeing from Vault or speeding ahead of them to get there. The route between the two cities had never been so used.

"Hey Isaac," Gareth called after half a day of walking.

"Hmm?"

"Why are so many people heading toward Vault? These are innocent people who have no reason to go there. They have nothing to gain from this." Gareth pondered.

"They have a lot to gain, Gareth," said Ivan softly.

"How do you figure?"

"Well, firstly, these people have all met Master Hammet at least once," Ivan began, "and Master Hammet has never really put the wrong impression on people. So if people have

met him, they generally want to help him. After all, he's done so much for people. He donates money, gives loans, leads expeditions to far-off places to get new material for selling and trading..."

"Not to mention he gave you a roof to live under," Sheba added.

Isaac smiled at Ivan's explanation. He knew many people were here to help Master Hammet, of course, but he had to wonder how many people were here just because they knew they had to be, like him.

"The other reason," Ivan continued, "is that most of these people realize they have to help in one way or another. These people are mostly from Kalay, and they realize that if Lunpa's forces get there, it's as good as ruined. Imagine having a huge enemy force in Vale, Gareth."

"Hmm...I see your point," Gareth said.

"Amazing," Jenna smirked, "Garet understood something!"

"Quiet down, Jenna, or I may have to show you what the river current is like," Gareth countered, and they all chuckled. The situation was too dire for actual laughter.

By nightfall, the group finally reached Vault, and found it to be, not empty, as Gareth expected, but absolutely packed. There was hardly room to move about the streets. Apparently, most people realized that Vault would be the battleground. As Isaac looked around, he saw a huge lack of civilians. All these people were armed to the teeth, preparing for a bloody war. There were no innocents here,

just people ready to die for something they were willing to defend.

"It's amazing..." Sheba marvelled.

"What's that, Sheba?" Jenna asked.

"All these people, coming together," she began. "I'm amazed that so many people would gather on Master Hammet's behalf, and he hasn't even talked to any of them yet!"

"It's not uncommon for people to come together to defend their home and their leader," Felix mentioned.

"I can't see people coming together to defend, say, Lord Babi," Sheba said.

"Yes, but in fairness, you have reason to have a grudge against him," Felix countered.

"I can't believe you even used the term fairness in the same sentence you referred to Lord Babi!" Jenna cried. "Sheba was a prisoner for no reason other than he wanted a lighthouse built with his name!"

"He needed the lighthouse to find Lemuria to stay alive," Felix reminded her. Jenna opened her mouth to argue, but Isaac stepped in.

"Whatever may have happened in the past is not our concern now," he said. "What matters right now is this war. Now, I wouldn't be surprised if this battalion numbered into the thousands by the time it's ready to march."

"Let me check," Ivan said. He quickly turned and Mind Read a passerby. "Yeah, you're right. The army will be into the thousands when they march."

"When do they march?" Gareth asked.

"Tomorrow at noon," Ivan replied.

"It's always at noon," Gareth grumbled. "Always."

Isaac led them out of town where they set up camp. He started thinking about the events of the following day. He started to worry. He knew that his friends wouldn't use Psynergy in combat. Well, Jenna, Sheba and Ivan might use low levels, just because they didn't have the physical strength needed to fight for very long. He started to wonder. Against such grand numbers, how great a chance did they have to survive? How long would it take until he started losing people? Until their group of six became a group of four? Or of three?

Or none?

Sol rose in the morning to see Isaac already up, a short ways away from the campsite, dwelling with mixed emotions. He had spent the latter half of the night awake, thinking about the first battle that would take place in only a few short hours. Eventually, sometime before breakfast, Ivan and Sheba confronted him.

"You know, Isaac," Ivan said, "we really don't need a leader thinking thoughts like you were last night." Isaac turned on him, and Sheba giggled.

"Leave me to my thoughts, you dwarf," he smiled good-naturedly.

"We can't help it. They can be so amusing sometimes," Sheba laughed.

"Oh, whatever," Isaac relented. "A pair of mind-readers...how did I get stuck like this?"

"At any rate, you don't need to worry about us, Isaac," Ivan said. "We can handle ourselves out there."

"And if it looks like we're in trouble then I won't hold back with my Psynergy, ok?" Sheba asked.

"No," Isaac replied.

"What do you mean, no?" Ivan asked.

"I mean, these are still normal people being forced into war by Dodonpa. We can't go in there with Clay Spires and Spark Plasmas and Pyroclasms firing," Isaac reminded them.

"But if we're in trouble and we need to..." Sheba trailed off.

"Do whatever you need to in order to escape," Isaac said.
"No more, no less."

"Very well," Ivan relented. "Now are you going to come and get breakfast? I want to make sure Gareth doesn't get near the fire..."

"I'll catch up to you two in a bit," he replied. The two Jupiter Adepts nodded and left for camp.

'He's really serious about not using good spells, isn't he?' Sheba inquired. Ivan nodded.

'Say what you want about Isaac, he's never been happy with the prospect of hurting or killing people. This is going to be really hard on him,' Ivan admitted.

'This is going to be really hard on all of us,' Sheba corrected him. Ivan sensed she was terribly nervous about his, even more than he was.

'It's not too late to leave, you know,' Ivan offered. 'You can leave and no one will think any less of you...' Sheba cut him off.

'I appreciate you trying to give me a window to leave, but I'm not taking it. I'm staying here until the end,' she said. Ivan simply nodded and smiled at her.

'You and me both.'

Breakfast and lunch came and went for the Adepts (it went a bit slower for Gareth), and off in the distance, they could hear the war drums booming and the troops thundering off to the battleground. And opposing them, they saw the army of Dodonpa, marching toward them. No words were spoken, no terms, no conditions. The conditions had already been spoken and rejected by both sides. There was nothing left to discuss. The armies just met and began the fight.

Damn the peace.

"So what's the plan, fearless leader?" Gareth asked.

"We go in, help Kalay's forces," Isaac replied. "Repel Dodonpa's army, but try not to kill. Non-lethal blows. Let's just see if we can drive them off first." Jenna frowned.

"Do you really think that will work?" she asked.

"No. But I want to try and get out of this with as little casualties on both sides as possible," he replied.

"Tell that to them," said Felix darkly, gesturing to the front lines of both armies, where the blood had already begun to spill. Sheba looked on the verge of tears. Ivan noticed.

"If anyone wants out," Ivan said quietly, "last chance." Everyone denied him except for Sheba, who simply looked him in the eye.

'Thanks for trying.'

Isaac looked at his friends, for what he hoped was not the last time. He drew a deep breath and forgot everything else.

"Let's do it."

The six Adepts burst from the sidelines onto the battlefield. Battle-hardened by the deadliest creatures on Weyard, the six were the most devastating power on the battlefield. Garet and Felix immediately went to the same area and started leaping in and out of enemy ranks, hitting each enemy with the flat of their blade, dropping them, but making sure they could get up when it was all over.

Jenna, Sheba and Ivan, generally being the spell casters, stood back to back in a circle and fired simple spells, Ray and Fume, just enough to drop the enemy without killing them. If any enemy got too close, they ran into the head of a staff.

Isaac was alone on this one, having been separated from Garet and Felix early on. He danced in and out of the rows of Dodonpa's army, dropping every soldier he came to with the

flat of his blade. Isaac had no intention of killing anybody. To emphasize this, he sent a Quake attack into the ranks of a battalion on the other side of the field. The soldiers fell to ground. The attack didn't knock them out, but it did buy the Kalay side a little time to position themselves.

Isaac looked around the battle desperately for his friends. He hadn't seen any of them since this bloodbath started. He searched as best he could, which wasn't very well considering he was still dodging enemy attacks and delivering his own. He was isolated in this one, and he had no way of knowing where the others were.

Out of the corner of his eye, Isaac thought he saw something that wasn't quite right. The front lines were evenly matched along the field, and no side was gaining any ground, but on the other side of the field, Kalay's forces were dropping fast. Isaac tried to get there, but there were too many soldiers in the way. Thinking fast, Isaac cast Stone Spire into the ground. The spires stuck up from the ground and created a temporary stepping stone bridge, which allowed him to jump over most of the soldiers and reach the other side of the field. What Isaac saw there made his blood run cold.

Kalay's forces had dropped in number drastically. The grass was stained with a crimson hue and the cause of the sudden atrocity was to be seen just ahead. There, across a clearing caused by the lack of Kalay soldiers, staring at Isaac with no lack of hatred in their eyes, stood three human-shaped Mimics.

"Isaac," one sneered slowly. "Little, little Isaac. Why did you still decide to fight? This is no place for you! This is the place where the great King Dodonpa beings to extract his revenge!"

"The only revenge that will be extracted here will be by me, for what you have done to these people," Isaac said gesturing around the clearing.

"Well, then, Adept. Try your best," he taunted.

Isaac readied the Sol Blade, but soon found himself in the middle of a circle formed by the three Mimics. They were dancing around him at blinding speed, and Isaac found himself getting dizzy. But it wasn't because of the movement. As the Mimics danced around Isaac at lightning speed, they began to cause air fluctuations. Soon, A giant vortex formed around Isaac, as the Mimics cried "Tempest!".

Isaac knew this was bad. Tempest never sucked you in the middle . You were always thrown about the outside and then released. But stuck in the middle, Isaac found himself spinning uncontrollably, and, due to the suction from the inside of the vortex, he also found himself suffering from a lack of air. The Tempest attack suddenly became a whole lot more deadly.

Jenna, Sheba and Ivan were still repelling soldiers when they noticed the whirlwind that was Tempest start to pick up speed.

"Is that a Tempest attack?" Jenna asked.

"It would be...but that's a Tempest attack that was cast simultaneously," Sheba said.

"That's too powerful! It's going to wipe out this entire area!" Ivan cried. "We've got to go!"

"But what about Isaac?" Jenna worried.

"There won't be an us to find him if we don't get out of here now!" Ivan said, now yelling to be heard over the roar of the wind. Thankfully Gareth and Felix were still nearby, and when they saw Jenna, Sheba and Ivan in full retreat, they made sure to head out, too. Everyone was still worried about Isaac, but even Gareth realized there was nothing they could do now.

The Tempest attack picked up speed, and just about everything else, too. Soldiers were thrown around like dolls, and boulders were picked up and tossed like skimming stones across a lake.

And in the middle of it, Isaac fell unconscious, finally succumbing to the lack of air.

The armies had parted, both being thrown back by the power of the Tempest attack. Sol was setting, Luna was rising, and, for a short time, a quiet stillness reigned over the land outside Vault.

And also over one yellow scarf-wearing Defender of Venus, who now lay motionless among the debris.

(Dew): 0.0

whistling

(Dew): Another cliffhanger?!

What is this cliffhanger you speak of? I am not accustomed to this word.

(Dew): *picking up the cabinet door again*

Ack! Oh, come on, Dew! I need to build suspense somehow!

(Dew): So it's all right to kill Isaac?!

...not if I value my life.

(Dew): I want a chapter 5 NOW!!! *hits Omniflyer, who manages to block it with his hands. Unfortunately, this breaks his fingers in the process*

OW! Now how am I supposed to write the next chapter?

(Dew): Very fast!

With broken fingers?

(Dew): It might hurt a bit!

-_-* I get the feeling I'm in for a long couple of days.

To the rest of you, I'm going to take this time to mention that, thanks to the onset of school, I'm going to start updating this weekly, instead of bi-daily as I have been.

(Dew): What?! You just waited to put this cliffhanger in on the last chapter before you update in weekly periods?! You evil, sadistic...

This could go on for awhile. Please review!

***Chapter 5*: The First Calm**

Welcome back! Chapter 5 is here!

(Dew): You should have posted it faster after that last cliffhanger!

Be happy I posted it at all.

(Dew): You wouldn't dare not post the next chapter.

And why not?

(Dew): Because somehow you're getting good reviews for this thing.

Life's full of surprises, isn't it?

(Dew): True. *picks up a stool and smashes Omniflyer over the head with it*

Ackpth! What was that for?

(Dew): It's a surprise. ^_^

-_-* Typical.

In response to the reviews (wow, I actually have some to respond to!)

To MercuryAdept: Interesting...Very interesting, in fact. I can't believe I missed that. Three Gold Points to Mercury Adept for catching that!

(Dew): What do the Gold Points do?

If you get enough of them, you can read my stories on ff.net!

(Dew): Can't you do that anyway?

...it's a work in progress.

(Dew): *smack*

Disclaimer: (To the theme of 'Camptown Races')

I don't own Golden Sun today (do-dah, do-dah)

So please don't sue me; I can't pay (oh-di-dee do-dah day)

Chapter 5

The First Calm

Garet stood looking over the battlefield from where they had set up camp yesterday. Through all the pain of battle, of seeing people killed and blood stain the ground, the most painful part now was knowing that his best friend lay out there somewhere; maybe alive...maybe not.

Garet eventually turned his back on the sight and left for Vault. The forces had taken such a beating (due mostly to the Mimics) that they were struggling to reform themselves for the next attack.

The injured were the biggest problem, though. Felix spoke with the commander of the army and decided that the five of them (the group of Adepts, now referred to as five, which pained Garet even more) would take the injured to Bilibin. A temporary healing station had been set up in Bilibin, to care for the forces from Kalay that were injured. It was the best way to help now, Felix reasoned. With their abilities to use such techniques as Carry and Move, they could easily get many injured back to the healing station in no time.

It was a sad day, indeed. The sky itself seemed to be crying, as the setting Sol left way for dark clouds from the north to overtake the sky, blocking out Luna and drenching the land in droplets.

Garet ran into Jenna and Sheba at the outskirts of Vault, just as the last of the injured were being loaded into caravans and ready to move.

"Are we ready to go?" he asked Jenna.

"Yes," she said softly. "We'll leave first thing in the morning...right after we get some light." Her eyes were red, and Garet saw that she was taking this worse than he was.

"I still want to try and find Isaac," Gareth said. He could be very stubborn about things when he wanted to, and this was something he didn't want to let go of.

"We can't right now," Sheba reminded him. "We have to get these people to Bilibin." Gareth tried to interrupt but she kept talking. "No, don't you see? Isaac joined this war to stop as many people from being hurt as he could. We have to keep going to stop these people from being hurt worse, for him. It's what he would want."

"You're acting like he's already dead!" Gareth burst, the Mars temper now showing itself.

"He may as well be," Felix interrupted, appearing from behind them, "if he isn't already."

"Felix!" Jenna cried. "How can you say that?!"

"Isaac would have returned to us if he could. He was probably the target of that Tempest spell cast that ended the battle. If he was in the middle of that...then there's nothing we can do for him now," he said sadly.

"Isaac is stronger than any of us!" Gareth admitted. "Even me!"

"But he has limits, just like any person does. And being blasted by an extremely powerful, team spell of an element you're weak against...those are the limits," Felix concluded. "As much as we hate it...Isaac is dead."

The night came and went without much excitement, save for some very broken emotions and a chorus of crying. Eventually, the clouds that had plagued the battlefield

overnight parted, and Sol rose to shed new light on a grim day. With the rain finally gone and the whole day before them, what remained of the party, the five of them, left, bringing the injured in tow, about 150 of them in caravans, stretchers and some on horseback if they had the strength.

As part of a recent trade deal between Bilibin and Kalay, a path was cut over the mountain so merchants and people could cross without having to rely on the hazards of the cave that cut through it. Felix lead the assortment of malady-stricken soldiers across the mountain range. By nightfall, they had reached Bilibin, and saw, much to their relief, that the healing station was positioned just outside the town and they would not have to navigate the city to find it. They were approached by a young nurse, who lead them to the infirmary. The inside of the infirmary was very cozy. In fact, Felix was amazed that they managed to build such a lovely building on such short notice. The interior was quite spacey and could easily accommodate the injured. The walls were ivory in colour, and a large recreational area out back provided fresh air for the recovering. Felix almost wished he was injured. Then he remembered Isaac and quickly regretted it.

"This place is really quite amazing," Ivan said to a nurse who was passing by. "How long did it take to build?"

"Oh, not that long, actually," she replied. "We got a lot of support from the townsfolk who helped us, and those who came here fleeing from Vault were quite helpful, too. We even got some folk from places as far off as Imil to help us!"

"Imil, you say?" Ivan wondered.

"Yes, but the few who arrived from there were mostly healers."

"Can you tell me," Ivan asked, excited, "what their names were?"

"Certainly," she said. "There were two older healers...their names were...Micheal and...Jori, I believe. And the healer who they were with was very pretty...her name was...oh, dear, it was..."

"Mia?" Ivan supplied.

"Yes, yes, that was it," the nurse smiled.

"Can you tell me where to find Mia?" he pried.

"Of course. The last time I saw Mia, she was in the office. Down this hall, fifth door on the right," she offered helpfully.

"Thank you!" Ivan replied, running off to find Mia. It had been so long since he had seen her, he was sure she would be happy to see him and the others, as well. He was sure she missed him, Sheba, Garet, Jenna, Felix and...Isaac...

Ivan slowed his pace. How could he break this news to her? He didn't have long to ponder this, because just when he was thinking, a blue-haired healer stepped out of the room in front of him.

"Mia!" Ivan yelled in surprise. "You're here!"

"Ivan?" she revelled. "I can't believe it! It's so great to see you! Are all the others here too?"

"Yes," Ivan replied, only half a lie.

"I never expected to see you here! Let me guess, Isaac decided to help with the war and you guys all got dragged

into it?" Her summary was startlingly accurate for a non-Jupiter Adept.

"Yeah," Ivan said shortly. Mia paused.

"What's wrong Ivan? You seem...distracted," she wondered.

"Well...Mia...it's like this..." Ivan stumbled. Mia looked at him curiously, and Ivan suddenly snapped his fingers.

"Here, take my hand," he offered. Mia took it, and suddenly Mia's consciousness was flooded with the events of the last couple days. She laughed as she saw Gareth fall in the river, felt Ivan's apprehension the morning before the battle (Was that really only yesterday morning, Ivan wondered. I feel so much older...) and felt her own grief and sorrow as she saw the battle and the Tempest attack. But mostly, she felt her own pain at seeing the events as they related to Isaac.

"Isaac...is..." She couldn't find the strength to finish that sentence. Ivan bowed his head.

"He was the greatest of all of us. Even Gareth could admit that," he said quietly. Mia nodded.

"It's going to be hard to do this without him," she said. Ivan smiled at her sadly as he walked towards where the others were.

"Harder for some of us than others."

"What's that supposed to mean?"

That night, a fire burned softly out behind the building. The group of Adepts, now Mia included, surrounded it, bowed

their heads, and thought their last thoughts about Isaac. Ivan was thinking that it was far too early to be remembering Isaac for who he was and saying goodbye, but it was better they dealt with this now than later, especially given the circumstances.

"He was a good friend," Felix said. "He wasn't afraid to stand up for what he believed in. And he was always ready to help someone in need."

Mia nodded. "The first time he helped me...was at the Mercury Lighthouse. He not only moved two statues out of my way but he killed that beast that was blocking my path." Both Gareth and Ivan chuckled, remembering how frustrated Mia had gotten trying to get past all those obstacles alone.

"He was a strong fighter, too," Gareth offered. "I remember...at Colosso..."

Isaac was tired. That much was certain. He had just finished the third obstacle course of the day, and collected the equipment moments before his opponent. And now they faced, and Isaac was worried.

After all, he was at a huge disadvantage. His opponent was physically stronger than him, bigger than him and older than him. The only physical advantage Isaac had was his speed and he intended to use it. After all, he didn't want to use Psynergy if he could avoid it...

His opponent charged him, and Isaac nimbly evaded the attack. Bringing his sword around, he tried to slash at his opponent's torso, but it was too well defended with armour. Isaac decided he had to try a different method of attacking.

Once more his opponent charged him, but this time instead of slashing, Isaac simply spun underneath his legs and tried to trip him up. It worked, but unfortunately, the other warrior landed on top of him. Isaac was winded, and the other warrior stood up. He lowered his weapon for the final strike, but thankfully Isaac managed to get his weapon up to block.

Isaac knew that he was in a bad position, and he needed a new strategy that would work. Unfortunately, he only had one last chance at it. He knew that if he took much longer, the opponent would be able to take him out on the next attack.

He knew Babi wanted to see some Psynergy, and he knew the fans wanted to see their money's worth. So, with a call of "Ragnarok!" and some flashy psynergy skills, Isaac managed to drop the other warrior just long enough to be crowned Colosso Champion.

"Those were good times," Ivan smiled.

"They certainly were," Garet said.

"Even I enjoyed the finals," said Sheba, who, despite her imprisonment, could still see the finals as they were held in Tolbi. After all, where could she run to?

"Although, if you recall," Mia smirked, "Isaac lost consciousness because of exhaustion after the final battle."

"That was really nerve wracking," Garet said.

"So nerve wracking, in fact, that a certain someone ate all of Isaac's share of the food while he was unconscious," Ivan said.

"Hey, he wasn't eating it, and it was going to go to waste," Gareth smiled sadly. Ivan nodded, and let his thoughts roam again.

"Do you remember his Megiddo attack...Garet...from the Sol Blade?" Gareth nodded.

"I could never get that to work," he smiled. "Apparently the attack draws on your soul. The purer and more powerful your soul is, the more power you get into it."

"Isaac was the only one of us who could use it," Felix smiled sadly.

"Isaac..." Mia trailed. "How could we let this happen to you...?"

A few awkward moments of silence passed, and eventually, at the same time as if it was co-ordinated, both Mia and Jenna started crying at the same time.

"He was..." Ivan said, obviously holding back tears as well, "...a great guy. He was the kind of person...you were proud to call your friend." Gareth closed his eyes.

"Isaac...wherever you are, buddy...stay safe."

Jenna had her face buried in her hands, now. "It's going to be... hard to do this... without you Isaac," she cried.

"Fate is truly fickle," Felix mumbled, trying hard to keep his voice even, "to allow you, of all of us, to be the one to fall." Sheba gave him a sad smile.

"You know that even if it was going to be another one of us to fall...Isaac would have taken our place," she whispered.

"Without hesitation," Ivan nodded slowly.

"And now...now, he's gone. And we didn't do anything about it," Gareth said, so quietly it was barely heard by all.

"That's the worst part," Ivan bowed his head. "By the time we realized he was alone...it was too late... And we let him go."

"He wouldn't have," Jenna sniffed. "He would have come to find us." Sheba sniffled.

"And when it was needed...where were we...?"

The chorus of crying from the girls was made heard again, and this time even Ivan and Gareth had a hard time keeping their eyes dry. Everyone stared into the fire, remembering their fallen friend, and wondering what would happen now without his strength to lead them.

The fire began to shrink, and soon it was no more than a burning ember. Yet, still, Mia, who had been choked by tears since the crying began, felt obligated to make one last promise to him.

"We'll always remember you, Isaac," Mia sniffled. Then softer, so no one could hear, "I'll always remember you..."

And those were the last words spoken. Mostly because no one needed words anymore. There wasn't a dry eye around the fire anymore. Even Felix, through his cold exterior, softened a little and a few drops escaped his eyes before he brushed them away, too.

The fire finally burned out and died, smoke rising, but now definitely extinguished.

The second extinguishment in two days.

I really have no idea if that was truly sad, or just...terribly written.

(Dew): You know which one I think it was!

That I do. Which is why I'm not asking you to review this!

(Dew): Which is why I'm not asking you to block the stool!
hits Omniflyer with it

OW. Don't you remember what happened the last time you did that?

(Dew): Sure. You whined about your fingers and then produced a chapter as normal, albeit a week later...

(Why do I put up with this guy...?)

(Dew): Because I'm not leaving.

Oh, yeah.

Ok, to the rest of you, or at least those of you who are reviewing (which I hope will be the rest of you), I want to know if this was actually sad or if I should burn the floppy disk I saved it on. I can take it! Give me your best shot!
gets hit by a flying stool from Dew NOT YOU!

***Chapter 6*: Scrap of Hope**

To everyone who reviewed the last chapter, thank you for your time, and I'm glad that so many of you thought what I was writing was actually emotional in some way. As an author, I always critique myself rather harshly, so I didn't expect to get such a great bunch of reviews. Thanks in part to the warm response to the last chapter, I've decided to post the next chapter ahead of schedule (don't worry - the next chapter will be up later this week, as well. Just consider this a bonus!)

(Dew): Right. What you mean to say is that you were sick on Sunday so you had more time to write, hence you can publish this chapter and the next one later this week.

...Whatever you say, Dew.

(Dew): Excellent! Everyone maul Omniflyer!

That's not what I meant! [A large group of djinn appear from nowhere and start mauling Omniflyer] Ouch.

(Dew): That's the way to start an update! ^_^

Review Responses

To Void: The idea for the Sol Blade drawing on it's wielder's soul for Megiddo was meant in no way to be some mix-up

with sol/soul. However, I will admit that it's a very nice little bit of alliteration...

(Dew): Are you sure you just didn't know that Sol means sun?

I've been referring to the sun as Sol for...how many chapters?

(Dew): 5 agonizingly painful chapters.

...they aren't that bad.

Disclaimer: Just out of curiosity...Is there a single person out there who actually, honestly believes the authors on ff.net own Golden Sun?

Chapter 6

Scrap of Hope

The night went by uneventfully for everyone but Mia. While the others were more or less sleeping, she was preoccupying herself with the patients. Again, she heard the talk from the people that she was healing about her being an angel. 'When will that ever stop?' she wondered.

She eventually stumbled across Sheba, who was up reading in the waiting room.

"What are you doing here, Sheba?" Mia asked her. Sheba paused a moment before looking up.

"I couldn't sleep," she replied. Mia took the seat next to her. She hadn't noticed how soft these chairs were...

"Neither could I," Mia sighed. "I don't think I'll be sleeping for a while."

"Most of the others aren't, either," Sheba mentioned. "Only Gareth and Felix are asleep. Jenna's still getting over the shock, and I was keeping Ivan up so long talking..."

"I wonder how they do it?" Mia thought out loud. Sheba looked at her puzzlingly. "Sleep, that is. With all of this going on."

"What you wouldn't give for a sleep spell right now, huh?" Sheba smiled. Mia nodded sadly. "If you really want it, I could always use Sleep on you..." Sheba offered.

"Maybe a little later," Mia replied. "But thanks for the offer. I'll never get over it if I run and sleep through it all the time." Sheba frowned.

"You'll also never get over it if you don't rest a bit, too."

"That's true. I guess I'll try and turn in," Mia said, rising to leave for her room.

"Good luck," Sheba said, returning to her book, still not tired in the least, nor believing Mia would be sleeping right now. It made her wonder if she would react like this if she ever lost Ivan...

The next morning came far too fast for any of the Adepts. They all trudged down to the dining hall as soon as they thought themselves ready to appear before the others, and ate a quick breakfast, despite Gareth's insatiable appetite.

They stayed at the table for a couple of hours, in fact. Though they were convinced they wouldn't after their farewell the previous night, Isaac got wrapped up in the conversation again, everyone reminiscing about their leader. After what seemed to be days, but was really only a couple of hours, Felix stopped the conversation.

"As much as I would love to continue talking about Isaac and making us all the more depressed, we really need to get going," he said quietly.

"Go where?" Jenna asked.

"Back to Vault," he replied. Sheba shuddered, and Ivan slipped her hand into his under the table.

"Why Vault?" Ivan asked. "Let's just be blunt about this. Let's skip all the side battles and head straight for Lunpa." The others looked at him curiously. Surely this wasn't Ivan speaking? He had never wanted to get right down to a fight before. He was always the careful one. Jenna noted that the loss of Isaac had changed everyone present, including herself.

"Because Lunpa is going to be impossible to reach," Felix said. "Anyone going to Lunpa is either crazy or overconfident."

A golden, nearly white glow came over a small portion of the area that was the battlefield a few days ago. It surrounded one figure in particular, and then stopped. The figure rose, bruised, battered, bent, and beaten to within an inch of his life. But he was alive. He stood, sheathed his sword, and got his bearings. He looked around for the direction Lunpa was in, muttered one word, and took off for the city of thieves.

"Dodonpa....."

"Yeah, but we aren't anyone," Ivan said. "We're many people. Many dangerous people armed with Psynergy and the will to end this before it goes any farther." Again, everyone looked at Ivan. Even Gareth noticed the difference, which really is saying a lot.

"I agree with Ivan," Gareth said. "It's time to end this before Dodonpa gets any more tricks out, like those stupid Mimics." Everyone shuddered at the memory. "Jenna, are you in?"

"I'm in this one. For Isaac," she said.

"For Isaac," Gareth nodded.

"Sheba, are you in?" asked Ivan. She nodded.

"You don't even have to ask," she said. Felix looked at Mia.

"I'm in, then. Are you, Mia?" An unusually cold glare came over Mia's typically soft face.

"Dodonpa is mine."

The figure made its way across fields and rivers, every so often regaining enough strength to cast Cure, which made it a lot easier to move. Eventually, he came to the outskirts of Lunpa, and, like he had in the past, relied on the tunnel outside of town to sneak in. There was a large gate in the way that was unopenable from this side. Not one for subtlety this time, the figure cast Ragnarok and broke the fence down.

Unfortunately, as he passed through it, his scarf caught on part of the fence where it was sharp from Ragnarok and ripped, leaving a bit of yellow fabric behind. The figure paid no attention to it and moved on.

Hours later, the group of Adepts were well away from Bilibin, having already borrowed Caravans to travel with, and were well on their way to Lunpa. They received word that the next time the two armies would meet would be tomorrow at noon ("It's always at noon," Gareth grumbled). Not wanting to get caught in the skirmish, the Adepts hurried to make the best possible time to Lunpa. If they kept up this pace, they could be there within the hour.

"What do you think the odds are we can get in the city?" Felix asked Ivan.

"Slim to none. It was hard enough to get in when Master Hammet was captured last time. We'll have to use that tunnel outside of town again. However, I don't know if we can get through it still. They may have blocked it with more gates since we were there last, due to the war," Ivan said.

"We'll get through it," Mia said. "One way or another."

Ivan turned to look at Mia. She had changed the most out of all of them. Mia never liked going into a battle, but here she seemed...vengeful. There was nothing more important to her now than seeing Dodonpa brought to justice.

'Of course not,' Sheba cut into his thoughts. 'She's lost something very important to her.' Ivan chuckled sadly, not loud enough for anyone to hear.

'So if I go and die, can I expect you to act like her?' Ivan joked.

'What makes you think you're important to me?' Sheba smiled at him.

'Your mind betrays you,' he replied. She blushed.

The caravan reached Lunpa just as Sol was beginning to hit the mountaintops around Lunpa. Felix imagined they would have about three hours left of daylight.

"Ok, Ivan," Felix said, "show us this cave."

"Sure," he replied, and they walked to where Ivan remembered the cave was.

"You see," Jenna joked with Gareth, "this is why we have Ivan lead: because he's not likely to lead us into rivers or anything." Gareth smiled.

"Yeah, but this way is so much slower," he said. "You go a lot faster if you stay with a river current." They started to laugh.

"Will you two keep quiet?" Felix hissed. "We don't need them knowing where we are!" he reminded them, gesturing in the

general direction of Lunpa. The two Mars Adepts grinned sheepishly.

"Here it is," Ivan said, pointing at a cave entrance in the mountainside.

"Let's go, then," Mia said shortly.

They entered the cave. It was dark and damp inside, but there was enough light to guide the Adepts. The torches were all burned out, and the ground was more uneven than Gareth remembered, as he continually tripped.

"Ow!" he cried after about the fourth trip. "Darn ground!"

"Will you be more careful?" Jenna hissed. "They're going to hear us!" Gareth opened his mouth to counter, but instead opened in wonder as they stumbled across the gate. Or rather, what used to be the gate.

The figure climbed a tree, and bounced over to the castle that belonged to Dodonpa. He had done some major redecorating. The castle was huge, now, adorned with fine fabrics and materials. The figure carefully scaled the outside wall, so as not to attract attention. He slipped in a window, climbed the inside wall so as to hang from the wooden ceiling support beams, and started looking for Dodonpa from the ceiling.

"What could have done this?" Gareth wondered. "This looks like an Adept's handiwork..."

"More specifically, Gareth," Ivan said, "this was the handiwork of a Ragnarok attack." A silence filled the room.

"Do you mean...?" Mia said, her voice quavering.

"I mean this looks like the work of a Venus Adept," Ivan smiled.

"Don't get ahead of yourselves," Felix said, grounded as always. "There could be another Venus Adept we don't know about."

"Oh, don't be so pessimistic, brother," Jenna said, a large smile beginning to show on her face. "I think Isaac was here."

"Whatever the case," Felix said, "we need to keep moving." The Adepts formed a single file line and went through the narrow opening, having no trouble doing so until...

"Ow!" Mia yelled in surprise.

"What's wrong, Mia?" asked Jenna.

"Oh, nothing... I just caught my robe on the fence..." she noted that the fabric had ripped off, saw where it had caught, and gasped.

"What is it this time?" Jenna asked, concerned.

"Look...look, right where I ripped my robe..." Mia said, pointing at some ripped yellow fabric.

"Is that...part of Isaac's scarf?" Gareth wondered, noticing the material.

"It is," Sheba said.

"He's alive..." Mia whispered. "He's alive!" She and Jenna grasped each other's hands and danced around the cave, trying to make as little noise as possible, but also letting themselves enjoy the moment. The others were also visibly energized, now with a new sense of purpose, knowing that Isaac may still be alive.

"So what's the plan now, Felix?" asked Gareth, after the rush of joy had worn off.

"Same as before, except now he have to expect to run into Isaac," he said.

"You mean...in the castle?" Jenna wondered.

"Why else would Isaac be here?" Ivan questioned.

"He's trying to do this by himself, isn't he?" Sheba thought out loud. While Isaac was never one for foolish strategic moves, she supposed being alone on the battlefield may have convinced him to do something rash.

"I'll kill him," Mia said. "Right after I save his life, I'll kill him." Everyone laughed.

"Well, then, let's get this over with so we don't have to have another circle around the fire when this is over!" Gareth said, now smiling quite broadly.

"Amen to that," Sheba smiled.

They started walking and they were almost outside the cave on the Lunpa side when Gareth had to pose one last question.

"Hey, Felix?"

"Yeah?"

"How exactly do we intend to get inside the castle?" he wondered.

"Mia has the Cloak Ball, right?" Felix asked.

"Yes, I have it," Mia answered, feeling around inside her bag for it.

"Then that is our ticket in," he replied.

"But that only works in shade," Gareth said.

"Gareth, it's only two hours until Sol goes down. Once Luna's up, there will be plenty of shade," Jenna replied.

"Oh," Gareth said. "That'll work then."

So the Adepts waited for the two hours to pass, mere steps away from the fragments of clothing left by the Defenders of Venus and Mercury, which now stayed pinned together, giving the Adepts hope for the trials of the night.

(Dew): Does this mean Isaac's still alive?

Maybe.

(Dew): ...Does that mean he isn't?

Maybe.

(Dew): Allow me to rephrase that. You know Isaac is alive, or the other authors will kill you, correct?

That's an interesting way of putting it.

(Dew): I try hard.

Well, at least this wasn't...too much of a cliffhanger, right?
Right?

(Dew): Get writing.

Aww... To the rest of you, leave a review, please!

***Chapter 7*: Taking the Initiative**

Chapter 7 has arrived!

(Dew): Much to our dismay...

I'm so glad I don't listen to you. I would have given up on this story a long time ago...

(Dew): What a shame that would be.

I'm glad you concur.

(Dew): *throws the Game Boy at Omniflyer. The game cartridge falls out, and Golden Sun: The Lost Age clatters noisily to the floor* ...oops.

You....hurt....the game...

(Dew): No I didn't!! No I didn't!!

YOU...HURT...THE...GAME!!

(Dew): You can't hurt me! I'm protected by the International Muse Protection Society!

No number of IMPS can save you now, Dew! GET BACK HERE!!

(Dew): AH! *running away* Is this revenge of some sort for what I've done to you every other chapter?!

lumbering after Dew, groaning incoherently

Disclaimer: (Dew): Umm...he doesn't own Golden Sun. There, I did the Disclaimer for you. Are you happy? Please?! Help!!

Chapter 7

Taking the Initiative

The hours were passing by slowly. Very slowly. Gareth and Jenna noticed this.

"Man," Gareth complained, for only the twentieth time that hour. "Are we absolutely sure that we have no Psynergy that can quicken time?"

"I can stop time," Ivan smiled at him, referring to his Halt Psynergy, which indeed would freeze one object in time for a few moments.

"Oh, that helps a lot," Gareth said, his impatience now beginning to show to the others.

"Maybe it would go faster if you sat quietly," Jenna growled.

"Maybe it would go faster if we had some sparring matches while we waited," Gareth suggested. "You and me, Jenna?" Jenna frowned at him.

"I could beat you any day of the week, Gareth," she said.

"I would love to see that..." Gareth trailed off, and Felix sighed.

"Can you two not keep still for even ten minutes?" he wondered.

"That depends," Mia said. "How much time is left until night?" Felix looked outside the cave.

"I would say just over an hour," he replied. The Mars Adepts groaned.

"Then, no," Mia answered, and they started waiting again.

After about another half-hour, something very unexpected and welcome happened. A flash of light went off (nearly blinding the Adepts thanks to the darkness of the cave), and when they could see again, they saw seven djinn hovering in the air in front of them.

"Hey, everybody," Flint said. "I've brought the cavalry at last." The Adepts looked around and noticed the djinn Flint had brought.

"Flint!" Mia said in surprise. "Who asked you to bring the cavalry?"

"Isaac did," he replied, and a silence filled the room, but not nearly as deep a silence as it would have been a couple of hours ago.

"Zephyr," Ivan smiled, trying to change the topic from Isaac. "How have you been?"

"Not too bad," the djinni replied. "Things have been a little slow without you, and you know how much I hate that." Ivan chuckled.

Scorch jumped up to Gareth's shoulder. "Miss me?"

"What, I get you, but not Corona?" Gareth joked. Scorch hit him with his tail.

Mia bent over and picked up Tonic. "It's nice to have you back, buddy." Tonic hopped to her shoulder, finding a nice spot of warmth between her hair and robe.

"It's nice to be back," Tonic replied, quite comfortable.

Haze flew up to Sheba's height and hovered. "I know you wanted me back, Sheba," the djinni said laughingly, rolling in the air to show off a little.

"It's not the same without you," she replied, smiling.

Jenna and Felix smiled as Core and Petra made their way over to them. "You guys have great timing, don't you?" Jenna smiled.

"None better," Petra nodded.

"Not to interrupt all this happiness," Flint said softly, "but where's Isaac?" All the happiness in the room was again sucked out like Gareth with a plate of spaghetti.

"It's a...long story, Flint," Mia managed to say.

"But with a bit of luck, not a sad one," Jenna said meaningfully, with a look at Mia and then at the clothing fragments hanging on the gate. Mia nodded. Ivan spent the rest of the two hours explaining the events of the past days again, partially through Mind Reads and partially through talking. When it was all over, it was finally night.

Hour upon hour had passed by, and still the figure hadn't found Dodonpa. Climbing around the ceiling was growing tiring. The wooden support beams that held the ceiling up were beginning to hurt his hands, and it appeared that no matter where he turned, he ended up back where he started. Still, though, he continued, as if living only for this one purpose, and crawled across the ceiling to find Dodonpa.

A guard appeared from around another corner. Looking up, he saw the figure climbing on the ceiling. And promptly shuddered.

The figure dropped quietly to the floor. The guard froze. He would have drawn his sword, but the terror of this figure paralyzed him. The guard looked into the figure's eyes but saw nothing.

Just an empty void, devoid of the normal spark of life seen in the eyes.

The figure dropped the guard with a quick knee to his stomach and then an elbow to his back. The guard fell silently, and the figure rose to the ceiling again and continued, hoping not to have to waste his time with another guard.

It was the sixth one he'd dropped this hour.

"There," Gareth said, after Sol had finally sunk. "It's night. Now can we do this?"

"Let's do it," Jenna agreed, relieved that the time for action had arrived.

"Ok. It's time," Felix nodded. "Djinn, Set yourselves to somebody and let's go." All the djinn Set themselves to their partners, but Flint hovered around, a little depressed.

"You can come with me, Flint," Mia said. Flint nodded, and Set himself to her.

Mia wasted no time at bringing the Cloak Ball out of her bag. She clasped it tightly in her palm, waited until it glowed black and said "Cloak".

The effects were instantaneous, with all of the Adept's disappearing into the shadows. To the common passerby it would have meant a very long stay with a psychiatric professional. To the Adept's, however, the effects were nothing new or surprising, so they simply swallowed hard, took a deep breath and took to the back alleys of Lunpa, readying themselves for what they hoped would be the end of the war.

Of course, no one expected this to be an easy task. But a combination of dedication, the will to end the war, and the possibility of seeing Isaac again proved to be the motivational factors to the group of wayward Adept's. The seriousness of the situation was not taken lightly by any member of the group. Each was serious, was sincere, was pensive about the task at hand, and was totally focussed on the job. That's was Felix was thinking when he heard a loud thump.

"Darn it, Garet, will you stop tripping the soldiers?!" Felix groaned. Garet chuckled.

"I love Cloak..."

It didn't take long until they reached the drawbridge of the castle. Which, to the surprise of no one, was up, leaving a

very deep gap between them and the door. It was very apparent that Dodonpa wanted no visitors.

"Typical," Gareth sighed. "If there's an obstacle than can be in our way, it will be."

"So much for subtlety," Ivan said. "It looks like we can jump the gap if we get a speed boost."

'I'm one step ahead of you, Ivan,' Zephyr said to him mentally. Ivan nodded.

"We just need to get that wooden door out of the way somehow," he said, looking mischievously at Gareth and Jenna.

"Oh," Gareth said. "Oh!"

"This'll be good," Jenna smiled.

"What do you want to use for this?"

"Fume, maybe?"

"No, this has to be dramatic."

"Flare Storm?"

"I was thinking Inferno."

"I'm thinking Pyroclasm."

"Will you just choose one and use it?!" Felix burst.

"Fine, fine," Gareth said, gathering his Psynergy. Jenna did likewise. The other Adepts waited a moment until...

"Pyroclasm!" they cried, unleashing a blaze of fire that incinerated the door on contact.

"Call Zephyr!" Ivan cried, and the Adepts felt their speed rise dramatically.

"Jump for it!" Sheba cried. They leaped, and cleared the gap easily, landing safely in the castle. At least, as safely as could be considering they were in the lair of the war's instigator.

"We made it," Mia gasped.

"Was there any doubt?" Gareth laughed. He looked outside the burning door and saw throngs of soldiers staring at it, not able to comprehend what had happened to the door.

"Nice Pyroclasm, Jenna," he laughed.

"Thanks! You, too."

"If the congratulatory festival is done for the door removers..." Felix said impatiently.

"Congratulatory festival?" Gareth repeated. "It was a compliment and a thank you!" Jenna nodded.

"How long did it take you to think that phrase up, brother?"

"Fine, then," Mia said. "If the flirting is done..." Gareth and Jenna turned as red as the Pyroclasm they had just cast.

"I...We weren't...that wasn't...!" Gareth stuttered. Jenna mouthed wordlessly, and the others began walking to find Dodonpa from the safety of the shroud of cloak. Jenna was about to reply to Mia when Gareth dropped his hand on her shoulder.

"Just wait until we find Isaac for that, Ok?" he asked. Jenna grinned and nodded, and they followed after the others.

They followed twisting passage after twisting passage, passing curiously dropped guards as they went, and it seemed like every time they made a turn in the right direction, they ended up at the same intersection again.

"Geez, Felix, can't you get us there any faster?" Gareth wondered. "You're leading like I would."

"Gareth, don't say things so harsh," Ivan joked. Sheba giggled.

"I'll show you harsh, you midget..." Gareth muttered under his breath so no one could hear.

"I'll show you Spark Plasma," Ivan retorted.

"How did you hear...Stay out of my head!!" Gareth cried. Jenna started laughing. Gareth looked at her as if he was betrayed.

"Sorry, but I think Ivan's got you that time," she smiled.

It seemed like the farther they went, the bigger the castle was. No matter how well Felix led them, they always seemed to return to the same place. Ivan began studying the walls.

"This is starting to remind me of Air's Rock..." Jenna fumed.

"Mia, could you drop the Cloak for a minute?" Ivan asked.

"Why?" she wondered.

"I want to cast Reveal here," he said. As it turns out, not all Psynergies were meant to be used with each other. The last time Ivan had cast Reveal with the Cloak up, he had seen through the 'hidden truth' that Cloak put up, and seen a little more of his friends and little less of their clothes than he had intended...

Mia dropped Cloak and Ivan cast Reveal. Much to his surprise, though, the wall he had been scrutinizing showed nothing.

"There's nothing there, Ivan," Gareth said. But the Jupiter Adept's senses told him otherwise.

"No, there's something here, all right," he said. "Sheba, if we cast Reveal together, looking at the wall, do you think we could increase Reveal's power?" he asked.

"I don't see why not," she replied. "If the Tempest attack could work so well..." (her voice faltered a little) "...then a team Reveal should work well, too." And with that, the two Jupiter Adepts focussed on the wall and simultaneously cast Reveal.

And a doorway appeared.

The figure was still strolling along the hallways, finding nothing, when suddenly a group of people appeared from out of thin air. Something snapped in the figure's mind. A memory of the past...of people he used to know...people he used to be close to... but he shrugged it off, and noticed that the group had somehow revealed a hidden path. They opened the door that lead deeper within the castle, and silently, so as not to be heard, the figure crept in the door behind the last person and bolted for the ceiling again,

before he was noticed. He prepared to move on, but something held him back...something about these people kept him fixed there. So instead, he followed them, being careful not to be seen.

What was so special about these people?

The Adepts crossed the threshold, Mia going in last. As she did, she could have sworn she felt a breeze going up from behind her just as she went through the door, but after looking around and seeing nothing, she shrugged it off.

"Are we close?" Gareth wondered.

"I think so," Ivan replied. And no sooner had he spoken than they arrived at a large, empty hall. It was just a stone room. There was nothing to fancy it up. It was totally stone, save for the wooden support beams that held the ceiling up. Out of the corner of his eye, Ivan thought he saw something moving up there, but he figured he was just imagining things. There was nothing in this dark, empty room.

Mostly empty, anyway.

"Welcome, Adepts," called a cold voice. It was a much creepier, much colder and eviler tone of this voice in particular, but Gareth, Ivan and Mia would remember the voice of Dodonpa wherever they heard it.

"Dodonpa..." Mia whispered. "Where are you?!" she cried. "Show yourself!" The only reply was a laugh, and the sound of metal clanking against stone, and Mia turned to see a metal gate closing behind them, sealing them in.

"What is this?" Felix cried. Just as he spoke, three human-shaped Mimics appeared, having already perfectly disguised themselves as walls in front of the real walls.

"About time we got some action," Gareth said. But even before he had drawn his sword, Mia had her Meditation Rod at the ready, and was running towards one Mimic.

"This," she cried, "is for Isaac!" She whirled the Rod around to bash the Mimic's head in laterally, but it simply absorbed the blow and grinned. Mia jumped back and charged energy in her weapon, letting the weapon howl with power and unleash Nirvana, but the Mimic danced around it, grabbed Mia and flung her toward the wall. It raised one hand and clasped it around her neck and pinned her against the wall with it. In her panic, Mia dropped her Meditation Rod.

She struggled, kicking against it and trying to free herself, but it was physically too strong for her. The Mimic drew his sword and sent it screaming for her heart.

(Dew): *hiding in tree* 0.o

GAME...WAS...HURT....

(Dew): I'm sorry, everyone! I couldn't stop him from cliffhanging when he's mad about the game!

...Actually, I'm not mad at all.

(Dew): ...what?!

I just needed some free space to get a cliffhanger in without you hurting me for it.

(Dew): Oh, I will SHOW you 'hurting you for it!'

Eep.

[Due to the nature of this next portion, we can't write it even in the author's section at the end of a PG fic. Having said that, please review, and the update will come whenever Dew decides to stop mauling Omniflyer.]

***Chapter 8*: Soul vs Strength**

(Omniflyer is laying in bed with a laptop and covered by many bandages) Dew was kind of mad about that last cliff...

(Dew): *grumbling*

...Very mad.

the door bell rings

...? Dew, go get that!

(Dew): Get it yourself, you lazy bum.

I'm wounded!

(Dew): Doesn't matter.

Argh... *jumps out of the bed, bandages falling off, and appears to be in perfect health again* Huh. That was lucky.
goes to the door, and opens it Hello? Hello? Is anybody here?

???: Down here, moron.

looking down to see a Mars Djinni sitting on the front steps

Uh...oh...

(Char): The IMPS didn't think Dew was doing a good enough job, so they wanted two of us to be here.

Oh, bad day, bad day.

In response to the reviews:

To Void: Yeah, don't you just?

To MercuryAdept: I think Jenna and Garet liked that even more than you, come to think of it.

To Midnight C: What do you mean Mia can't die! Of course she can!

begins typing in the story "And Mia died a horrible, horrible death, with Isaac grieving over her."

(No sooner are the words written than they vanish from the computer screen, and Mia and Dew appear and unleash about every single Mercury Elemental attack on Omniflyer, in addition to Isaac's Odyssey attack) Hmm. I see what you mean.

To Akachi: Yeah, you see, the problem with sending Agatio after a djinni, is when that djinni Sets himself to me, and then I get beaten up in the hopes that the djinni will re-emerge...that was painful.

Disclaimer: I'm sorry, everyone, but I've been lying to you all! I really do own Golden Sun! I also have a perfectly chiselled body, millions of dollars, have my choice of sports cars to drive every morning, and am a Bridge Salesman in my spare time. Now, if you believe all that, there's this one great model in Brooklyn...

Disclaimer 2: If you actually believed that, I'm sorry. I actually DON'T own Golden Sun. Really. I'm telling the truth this time. Really!

(Dew:) JUST GET TO THE CHAPTER!

Eep.

Chapter 8

Soul vs. Strength

There was nothing Mia could do as the sword was sent flying towards her heart. None of the other adepts could do anything as they were too far away and their Psynergy took too long to cast.

And for a second, it seemed as though time froze, as so many things happened in that one moment.

Garet thought, 'If I let this happen, Isaac will never forgive me!'

Sheba watched in horror and sadness, realizing that this Mimic was going to break her heart for the second time.

The other Mimics looked on in anticipation and joy, happy to see one threat taken out before it could even react.

And the Mimic that was about to kill Mia suddenly found its sword-holding hand detached and its head rolling on the floor.

It was a feeling not even the figure could understand. Just watching from the ceiling as the Mimic disarmed the girl and prepared to kill her triggered something in him that he could not deny, and sent him flying at the Mimic, sword in his hand before he even left the support beam. He quickly removed the Mimic's sword hand and head, and stood, unmoving.

Mia opened her eyes, caught her breath, and wondered why she was still alive. And then she saw the one thing she wanted to.

She didn't even take the time to see if she was safe from the other Mimics. She just cried, "Isaac!" and ploughed into him, crying into his shoulder.

From the group of Adepts, Garet and Jenna smiled at each other and simultaneously cried, "Awwwww!" but that may have been a little premature. Isaac felt Mia crying into his shoulder and shrugged her off.

Mia stumbled back. "Isaac...what...?" She began to waver, her knees buckling, not able to understand why he had just shoved her away.

The other Adepts stared as well, unable to understand. It was almost confusing enough to make them forget about the other two Mimics. Almost.

"Isaac of Vale!" one cried. "You slew one of our number, but you cannot defeat us! We have defeated you once before, and that defeat shall plague you again now! We are invincible!" As if to prove their strength, they jumped into the lines of other Adepts.

Ivan let loose a Tempest, and Sheba followed with a Spark Plasma. The winds howled and the electricity crackled, but the Mimics remained little more than annoyed. Thinking that Psynergy was ineffective against these fiends, Gareth and Felix dashed to oppose them, and began exchanging blows. The match seemed even, so to better the odds, Sheba fired a Destruct Ray at one of the Mimics. The Mimic spun with his sword extended after parrying a slash from Gareth. He deflected the attack with an odd sword Psynergy skill that Sheba didn't recognize. The Destruct Ray bounced away from him and promptly struck Ivan. Ivan was thrown back against the wall and showed extreme difficulty in getting up. After all, he wasn't prepared to block it. Sheba gasped and ran over to him.

Finally, the Mimics managed to barely overpower Gareth and Felix, and when Jenna tried a Dragon Fume, it, too, was reflected this time towards Mia, who was still looking in some disbelief at Isaac. She didn't notice the attack coming, so again that feeling told Isaac to protect her. He stuck the Sol Blade in front of her, which easily parted the attack around her.

"It is you who shall now fall, Isaac," cried the Mimic, and the pair of them rushed at the Venus Adept. Isaac raised the Sol Blade and disappeared.

The others couldn't believe what they had seen. Mia had the Cloak Ball, after all, so Isaac couldn't have used Cloak to

disappear. The Mimics, apparently confused as well, stopped in the centre of the room, still facing Mia.

"Where are you, coward?" the other cried. His partner was about to speak, but a sudden blade piercing his throat from behind stifled all words. The first Mimic turned behind him and saw Isaac withdrawing his blade. "How did you get there?!" He cried. "You couldn't be that fast!!" He slashed as powerfully as he could, but Isaac simply deflected the blow and stabbed back, so fast that nobody present could see what had happened. The last Mimic slumped. "Forgive me.....King.....Dodonpa....."

The other Adepts looked at Isaac in disbelief. Mia slowly approached him, and the other Adepts pulled themselves off the floor, slowly approaching as well.

"Isaac..." Mia whispered. "This is not Isaac," she said.

"What are you talking about, Mia?" Gareth wondered. "Look at him!" But Mia shook her head. She stared into Isaac's eyes. There was no hint of the spark that had once been there. If the eyes are the window to the soul, then Isaac's was gone. Where his normal blue eyes shone, his eyes now were dull and lifeless. It was as if someone had taken an eraser that erases black instead of white, and ran it down Isaac's eyes.

"Look at this eyes, Gareth," Mia said sadly. "This is not Isaac anymore." Gareth moved forward to look, but Jenna shoved him out of the way.

"You're right..." she whispered. "What happened to him?"

"Where are you, Isaac?" Mia cried, dropping to her knees. Before anyone could speak, a brilliant light filled the room, and the Adepts saw no more.

The first thing Ivan could remember seeing was...nothing. Then he felt a cold floor, and looked down. He was lying on a stone circle, decorated with the symbol of Jupiter. Sheba lay next to him, so he shook her gently, and her eyes fluttered open.

Ivan looked around the room. It was a large stone circle, with four circles placed as though opposing corners around the room. Each circle contained the symbol for an element, and that element's respective Champion or Champions lay above it. Ivan tried to run to them, but he found that no matter how hard he tried, he couldn't leave the Wind circle.

"Wake up!" Sheba cried, looking around the room. Mia awoke from above the Water circle, and Felix awoke from above his Earth circle. It took a little longer to rouse the Mars Adepts, but they woke eventually.

"Okay," Garet grumbled when he roused, "where are we, and why can't I leave?"

"You are here," a voice boomed, "because I deemed it so. Because one of your number wondered about Isaac and I felt...compelled...yes, that is the mortal term for it...to explain it to you. You can't leave because I don't want you to yet."

"I know that voice," Jenna said. "Is that...?" Her question answered itself, as a large sphere that appeared to be made totally of rock with one large eye floated over to them from above. As it hovered in the centre of the circle, they noticed someone sitting, eyes closed, in the centre of the circle beneath him.

"Isaac!" Mia cried.

"What did you do to him, Wise One?" Felix said, nearly spitting the name 'Wise One' at him.

"I gave him life again. Or at least, I gave him the life he needed to end this foolish war you humans have started," it replied.

"What do you mean?" Sheba inquired.

"Strong though he may be, Isaac alone was not enough to end this war. So, I needed to give him the strength he needed. As he is now, Isaac is stronger, faster and more able to respond to tactical situations than he used to be," the Wise One loomed.

"Yes, but at what cost?" Jenna asked. It turned to face her.

"At the only cost that would allow me to grant him these gifts: his soul."

"You removed his soul?!" Garet burst. "What gives you the right?!"

"I didn't not remove it. I traded it for strength. At any rate, that is irrelevant," the Wise One continued. "The point is, Isaac now possesses enough power to end the war."

"Power often costs too high a price," Ivan whispered, so that the others could barely hear him.

"Be that as it may," it said, "he is exactly what you need right now."

"What we need right now," Mia said, voice trembling and rising, "is Isaac. Not this puppet that you created. We need a leader, someone to talk with and confide in, who can understand us and tell us what we need to hear when we

need to. All you've created is a body that dances to your whim. This...this thing," she spat, "can't lead us or guide us. He just does as he pleases and whatever happens, happens," she finished, now on the verge of tears.

"Not entirely true," the Wise One said. "While it can't lead you, it doesn't do as it pleases. It listens to me and obeys me entirely. And, should you be willing, I can make it listen and obey you, as well."

"Stop calling him 'it'!" Mia cried, sinking to her knees again.

"The point is," Ivan stared at the Wise One, "what this group needs is Isaac back. Being together is what gave us the strength to come as far as we have, and that is what will give us the strength to defeat Dodonpa."

"You speak of things you have no knowledge about," the Wise One answered.

"Funny," Gareth spat, "I was about to say the same thing to you." It turned to face him, now angry.

"Do you mock me, Mortal?!"

"Yes, I do," Gareth answered simply.

"Very well. Then we shall see just how strong this Isaac you have spoken so highly of is!" it roared, and suddenly, before them, were two Isaacs.

"Isaac...?" Mia asked meekly. The right one stirred.

"...Mia...?" He blinked. Where was he? Why were his friends all around him? Why was the Wise One above him? Who was this?! It looked just like him, but...it didn't feel the same. Not physically, of course, it just didn't...feel right.

"What happened?" Sheba asked. The Wise One rose higher.

"The Isaac on the right is the Isaac that you claimed as your leader. The Isaac on the left is my creation. They will fight now, and whichever one is victorious will live. The other one will die, making way for the stronger one, mine, to live."

"You're setting a death match of some sort?!" Felix cried. Unusual to see him show any emotion...

"Why, yes...Yes, I suppose I am," the Wise One replied.

The Warrior Isaac drew the Sol Blade. It glowed a piercing black, reflecting the soul of its wielder, which was empty, devoid of anything but strict combat training.

"I don't know how you've brought the two of us here, Wise One," Isaac said. "But if I must fight myself to regain my friends and my life, then I shall not lose." Isaac reached to draw, but realized that his Sol Blade was in the hand of the other Isaac. His scabbard was empty!

"No fair!" Garet cried. "How do you expect him to fight if he has no weapon?!"

"If he is truly as good as you claim, surely he can defeat a mere imitation of himself, armed or not," the Wise One laughed.

"You coward!" Jenna cried. "Give our Isaac a sword!" But the Wise One spoke no more.

Isaac shifted into the best fighting stance he could allow himself without a weapon, and waited until the other Isaac charged. When the other Isaac moved, however, no one saw it move. Some sense Isaac couldn't even place forced him to drop, so he fell to his back, and saw the Sol Blade extend

above him from behind. He kicked behind him and hit his adversary in the stomach. Winded, but not defeated, the other Isaac fell back.

It was at this point that Isaac realized that without a weapon, he really had no winning condition. He could bludgeon the other him until he couldn't move, but odds were that he would be killed by the Sol Blade long before then.

"Is there nothing we can do?" Sheba worried. Mia rose and paced about her circle. She pushed frantically against the 'walls' of the Water circle, but she couldn't leave. She looked down and noticed she had dropped her staff when she was brought here. In fact, the staff was lying with part of it outside the circle. Praying that the staff would not be subject to the same restriction she was, Mia turned it so it faced Isaac, and kicked it away.

"Isaac!" she cried, hoping to draw his attention to the staff that had just hit his foot. Isaac carefully bent over and picked up the Meditation Rod, which now trembled slightly, as if begging to unleash its special attack. Isaac had no problem with that.

"Nirvana!" he cried, and spheres of energy roped from the fake Isaac to the real one, and Isaac felt his strength growing. The other Isaac, however, suffered a drain of his energy. Thankfully for the Warrior Isaac, the real Isaac's lack of ability with a staff kept the Meditation Rod from damaging him too much, and also from using it to protect himself.

Isaac, however, realized this as well. Not only was he using a weapon he had no skill with, but he was facing a creature who contained all the physical skill he did, and also wielded the Sol Blade. And with that came the most powerful

weapon special he had ever seen: the Megiddo. The Megiddo attack was more powerful than even most of his best Psynergy skills.

And, as if reacting to his thoughts, the other Isaac allowed the Sol Blade to glow an even deeper black, until it gave off an eerie howl. The other Isaac smiled.

"Megiddo," he said darkly, not sounding like Isaac at all. He let the Sol Blade conjure a small meteor and then rose to smash it. The meteor flamed with a dark fire and crashed to the ground. Isaac saw it fall, and lowered Mia's Meditation Rod. It would be no use here.

Instead, Isaac, turned and stared up at the meteor crashing down upon him. He didn't even defend itself. He just let himself become swallowed up in its dark fire.

The explosion rocked the room, blowing all the Adepts to the back of their circles and deafening them.

And Mia realized she had lost Isaac again.

Huh. Not doing your new job too well, are you, Char?

(Char): 0.o

I mean, you're supposed to stop me from Cliffhanging.

(Char): 0.o

You know, I think she's shocked into silence, everybody.

(Char): 0.o

Char, continue your expression of "0.o" if you want to leave this house forever.

(Char): o.o

^_^* Typical.

(Dew): Oh, that's not right.

What isn't?

(Dew): Two cliffhangers in a row?

V_V Get used to it.

(Dew): ...You will die. *raises the couch*

How can you lift a COUCH?!

(Char): Rage.

Well, I suppose that...ack! Run away!!!

...no, not you guys. You have to review. That button down there. Go ahead. Take a chance.

***Chapter 9*: Dodonpa's Secret**

It's something that I'll have to work out.

(Dew): What's that?

How I'm going to write my upcoming cliffhangers without dying a horrible, horrible death at the hands of the other readers/authors.

(Char): ^_^ And me!

...and you.

(Dew): ...Wait...did you just say...Cliffhangers?

No! I said nothing about the cliffhangers I'm about to write!
...I mean...uhh...

(Char): Think...carefully.

What if I just started to write?

(Dew): I might be happy.

I'll do that, then.

Review Responses:

Warrior of Luna and Sol: Who said that?

Midnight C: Yeah, the Wise One always has some stupid loophole or trick up his (sleeve?), doesn't he?

Crystal, Mist, Shade: MERCY, PLEASE!!

Net Strife: I don't really write based on length, more like, "Where is the best place to end with an evil cliff?"

Akachi: Flaming Mallets are BAD!

Disclaimer: I don't own Golden Sun. Actually, I technically don't own Dew and Char, either, so if somebody wants to sue me for them...

(Dew/Char): We'll hurt them quite badly.

...Oh, yeah.

Chapter 9

Dodonpa's Secret

The Megiddo attack was the most powerful weapon special any of the Adepts had ever seen. This dark version was no

exception. Dust and smoke rose from the sheer force of the attack, and Garet could swear he saw the Wise One smile, even though the only facial feature he had was an eye.

The Warrior Isaac stood, now staring defiantly into each of the circles as if challenging them to defy his power. They all looked at him, Mia now in tears.

"You killed him..." she cried. "He's dead again..." She burst into fury, pounding at the restriction that kept her in the circle. "Stop toying with us!!" she burst.

"I'm not toying with you," the Wise one glared at her. "I'm just showing you how weak your Isaac, complete with a soul, is. He tried to beat the other Isaac, and met a swift death. How could you expect him to stop a war, or even help stop a war for that matter, if he can't even protect himself from his own death?"

"Death is overrated," called a voice from inside the smoke. The Wise One's eye went so wide it appeared as if it was nothing more than a whole floating eye, instead of being mostly rock. It turned to face the smoke, and waited for it to clear.

And when it did clear, the Adepts all saw Isaac standing perfectly unharmed in the centre of the room.

"Isaac!" Mia cried. "You're alive!"

"What?!" the Wise One boomed. "How?!"

"You know, this is the second time I've cheated death in the last three days," Isaac laughed. "Don't make me do it a third time." Garet laughed, and soon, all the Adepts were laughing uncontrollably. The Wise One, however, didn't see the joke.

"How are you alive?!" he boomed.

"Let me put this simply," Isaac began. "The power of the Sol Blade, Megiddo, calls upon the power of its wielder to properly work."

"My version of you has plenty of power!" the Wise One cried.

"Maybe so, but that's not the power I'm talking about," Isaac smiled.

"I think I get it!" Gareth exclaimed.

"Gareth understands something before the so-called 'Wise One'?" Ivan mocked.

"Look outside, Ivan, it's raining fire," Sheba joined in, and they all laughed.

"What do you mean?!" The Wise One burst, all patience now forgotten.

"It's easy. The power he means," Gareth said, "is the power of the Soul." Isaac nodded.

"Your flunky here has no soul. It's merely a puppet with my appearance that has some nice moves in battle. But it doesn't have heart or soul, which is what the Sol Blade relies on for its Megiddo attack," Isaac explained.

"It has power!" the Wise One exclaimed.

"It doesn't need power," Isaac said quietly. "What it needs is a soul. What it needs is a heart. It needs something to fight for and something to believe in. It needs something to share life with, to gain strength from and share strength with. It

doesn't have what I do. People to believe in and trust, protect and love."

"Mia," Gareth coughed, "Mia."

"Shut up, Gareth," Felix said. Mia blushed, and Sheba giggled.

"Then prove the rest of what you are saying, Isaac of Vale," the Wise One said. "End this fight!"

"Done and done," Isaac said. He brandished the Meditation Rod again and turned to face the other Isaac. "Now," he said sideways to his fellow Adepts, "what's keeping you guys in those circles? You should have been knocked back from the blast of Megiddo, even though it did no damage to anything, but you're still contained there. So what's keeping you still?"

"We're being held back by something," Ivan explained. "I don't know what, though."

"It can't be a wall, or something, because I sent my staff through it," Mia said.

"So, maybe an elemental barrier of some sort?" Sheba proposed.

"If it is, then that would explain why we're all on a circle that represents our element, and why we can't leave, but Mia's weapon could," Ivan said.

"Do you think the Djinn can go through?" Gareth asked.

"I don't know," Ivan admitted. "Hey, Zephyr!" he called. The djinni appeared on his shoulder. Just as Zephyr was appearing, the fight resumed between the two Isaacs, and both were exactly equal in strength this time, both parrying blow for blow.

"What's up, Ivan?" Zephyr asked.

"Do you think you can go Set yourself to Isaac for a few moments?" Ivan asked.

"Ok," Zephyr said. He zoomed off to Set, but as soon as he hit the circle's edge, he stopped. "That's funny...I can't go any farther."

"That's just what I needed to know. You can Set to me again," Ivan said. And with that, Zephyr re-Set himself. "The Djinn can't get through either. In order to go through, we'd need a djinn of a different element already Set to us." Gareth crossed his arms, deep in thought.

"There's gotta be something we can do..." he muttered.

"Flint!" Mia called. The Venus Djinn appeared on her shoulder and the other Adepts looked at her.

"You have Flint?" Jenna asked.

"Well, who else was he supposed to set himself to?" Mia asked.

"Good point," Felix said. "Now hurry up, Flint, and give Isaac a hand!"

"I'm going, I'm going," Flint said impatiently. He hopped over to Isaac and with a call of, "Are you ready, Isaac?", Set himself.

Isaac felt the power boost and knew he had the strength now to soundly defeat his other self, instead of just toying with him.

"Let me show you another power, Wise One," Isaac called up to him. "Maybe when we're all done, I might have taught you something."

"We shall see," it said.

"Let me show you how the soul can intervene in things like this. My friendship with these people and djinn are formed through the soul, and from this power I get the power to defeat whatever abomination you choose to send my way," Isaac said.

"Here, here!" Ivan said, raising an invisible mug to him.

Isaac readied the Meditation Rod, and charged at his counterpart, swinging the staff laterally and managing to knock the other Isaac's sword out of position. With an opening, Isaac cried, "Call Flint!", and the djinni's golden power flew through Isaac's staff. It bashed the other Isaac to the ground, stunned from the sudden onslaught of power. Isaac noticed the opportunity and raised his hands in the air. "I summon Venus!" Flint's power magnified the might of the Venus Adept, and the ethereal spirit of Venus appeared and blasted the other Isaac, the false Defender of Venus with the might of the earth. When the attack subsided, all that remained of the other Isaac was the Sol Blade, laying on the floor, no glow emanating from it any longer, and a familiar liquid on the ground in a jar.

"What's that?" Gareth asked, pointing at the jar.

"Is that...?" Ivan asked. The liquid was gold in colour, and shone with a spark of life, as though it was alive itself.

"That's...Water of Life," Mia gasped, recognizing the familiar healing item. On all of their journey, they had only come across the rare item once. When used, Water of Life restores

life to one person, bringing them back from death, even beyond the powers of the Venus Revive Psynergy. Ivan had used it on Sheba atop the Mars Lighthouse when she fell to the Doom Dragon. Isaac picked it up and put it in his bag. He turned to face the Wise One.

"So that other me was just a powerful puppet brought to life with a Water of Life. And since I defeated it, the Water of Life returns for me to use. Funny how things work out, isn't it?" The Wise One didn't acknowledge his statement. Isaac turned to look at the Sol Blade.

"Take it, Isaac," Felix said. "Reclaim what was yours." Isaac walked over to it and picked it up. It immediately shone a brilliant gold, and the warmth of Gaia's Champion emanated from it again.

"Very well," the Wise One fumed. "Even I can see when I have been wrong. Go with your friends, Isaac of Vale. Go, and may you be successful in halting Dodonpa and putting an end to this war you so foolishly started." And with that, and another brilliant flash of light, the Adepts found themselves falling unconscious again.

Garet groaned. "You know, he's gotta learn a better way to do move us somewhere than that," he moaned, once he and the others regained consciousness. They had returned to the room where the Mimics had ambushed them. The gate was still down, however, so they couldn't leave. Isaac was about to reply when he felt a sudden weight hitting him from behind.

"You like torturing me like this, don't you?" Mia inquired, smiling and holding onto him from behind. He turned to look her in the eye.

"I honestly don't like the idea of me dying any more than you do," he said. "But if it makes you feel any better, I don't intend on leaving you any time soon." Gareth and Jenna looked at each other.

"Awwwwwwwwwwww..."

After a very long discussion period in which everyone displayed great happiness many times over at having Isaac back, the group eventually remembered why they were in this dark, boring room.

"Dodonpa," Ivan said.

"Dodonpa," Isaac nodded. "It's time to end this."

"If we can find him," Jenna corrected him. "It took us forever just to get here." A cold voice sounded from behind them.

"And it will take a lot longer than that for you to ever leave." The group whirled on the sound.

"Dodonpa!" Gareth exclaimed.

"That's King Dodonpa, you insolent boy," he said. "What do we have here? Seven pathetic fools who have entered my secret lair. Do you know what that means?"

"We win?" Felix asked grimly. Dodonpa smiled as he pulled out a sword.

"It means you die now, Adept," he said menacingly. Jenna scoffed.

"You against all of us? I highly doubt it."

"No, no, you don't understand. Allow me to show you the secret behind Transmute Psynergy," he cackled. "It's a rather impressive Mars ability."

"Mars Psynergy?!" Gareth burst.

"Great, not only is he an Adept, but Mars, too! He's ruining our element!" Jenna said, in a mock complaint.

"Observe," Dodonpa said. "Just as I can take an ordinary treasure chest Mimic and grant him powers beyond your comprehension," ('So that's it,' Ivan thought), "I can also take this ordinary sword, and change it into a weapon beyond even your power."

"I'll believe it when I see it," Mia said.

"Then believe it!" Dodonpa cried, unleashing his Mars Psynergy into the weapon. "Transmute...! Bloodlust Katana!" The sword he held was bathed in a dark crimson light, and when it had subsided, it revealed a long, thin katana. The sword looked extraordinarily light. The hilt was a dark black, and the metal of the blade seemed to flicker, as though a fire burned within it.

"So what?!" Gareth exploded. "So you can do some fancy magic tricks. It doesn't make you a better swordsman!" Dodonpa laughed.

"Who said the sword was for me?"

"What are you getting at, Dodonpa?" Isaac asked, drawing the Sol Blade. Its light again bathed the Adepts in a golden glow.

"You fool..." Dodonpa began. "This is where the battle ends." He laughed. "When mastered properly, unlike those two

bumbling wanna-bes," he said, gesturing at Jenna and Gareth, who promptly began fuming, "the Mars element can be pushed far enough to include the powers of rebirth. Like the mighty Pheonix, the well trained Mars Adept can call back spirits from the grave and endow them with powers the likes of which they never knew before!"

"So that's your plan?" Isaac said, almost smiling. "Recall something that has already fallen, give him or her a fancy sword and then run away, hoping we'll lose? I would hope the mighty 'King Dodonpa'," he continued, placing careful emphasis on those words, "could at least think of a better plan."

"We'll see, Isaac!" Dodonpa screamed. And with that, he threw the sword in the air, and it hovered as Dodonpa began chanting the words of the Rebirth spell. The spell was cast before the Adepts could do anything to stop it. Dodonpa was careful to not reveal the name of the spirit he was recalling, hoping to keep the advantage of surprise. Finally, he stopped chanting and smiled at the Adepts.

"Was that it?" Gareth asked Isaac. Before he could answer, Dodonpa addressed them.

"It's all over for you," he laughed, putting up a smokescreen. By the time it had dissipated, Dodonpa was nowhere to be seen. However, a large smokescreen was slowly dissipating nearby, revealing something the Adepts had never counted on seeing again. A dark voice came from inside the smoke.

"I am the shadow..."

"No way!" Gareth exclaimed.

"...the keeper of light..."

"It can't be!" Sheba gasped.

"Ye who hold the Sun's power..."

"What's the plan, Isaac?" Mia asked.

"...relinquish it now!"

Isaac's eyes narrowed.. "We show him why he lost last time."

Dullahan had no intention of losing again. Bloodlust Katana in hand, and the energy for Formina Sage gathering in the other, the Adepts could do nothing but draw their weapons and prepare for the battle of their lives.

Again.

(Dew): 0.0

Like the cameo?

(Char): You.....he.....they.....DULLAHAN?!

Looks like it.

(Dew): Of anyone to bring in, WHY DULLAHAN?!

Seemed like a good idea at the time.

(Char): But that's....it's....how can you...GAAHH!!

Looks like my muses don't like Dullahan.

(Dew): Who does?!

Anyone who's defeated him.

(Dew): 0.0...that's how many people, exactly?

Probably around three.

(Dew): I thought so.

To the rest of you, please review, and try not to kill me too badly for bringing Dullahan back, OK? I mean, it's not like he can hurt you too badly, right? I mean, he can only attack three times a turn, Curse you, KO a person in one shot with one of his death techniques, syphon HP from many characters at the same time, summon Charon and set all Djinn for your active characters to Recovery. Not to mention he recovers 200HP a turn. That's not too bad, right?

(Char): Oh, I want to hurt you just for saying that...

***Chapter 10*: Multiple Personalities?**

The big first double digit chapter! ^_^

(Char): I don't know HOW you made it this far...

to the tune of the old 'Green Giant' jingle Me neither.

(Dew): ...no comment on that.

No comment? Happyness!

(Dew): Many beats, though. *casts Freeze Prism*

Cold cold cold cold cold.....

(Dew): ^_^

(Char): I still can't believe you brought back Dullahan.
DULLAHAN! He's unbeatable!

(Dew): *nodding* To quote: "You know there's no stopping Dullahan! He's the evilest of the evil--the guy created the day some idiot at Camelot finally cracked!" -(if I need to tell you who wrote that and which fic it's from, go get your head examined for NOT reading it yet...)

So speaks Dew.

(Char): Can we get on with this?!

Fine, fine!

Review Responses:

Void: I like to keep surprising people! ^_^

Midnight C: Yes, we're clear. Very clear. Clear as mud.

Crystal (muse): *drops a brown bag with the label 'Pixie Stix* Oops. I accidentally dropped a bag of pixie stix! I sure hope I don't get distracted by something and leave it here by accident! Hey, look! It's a bus! *goes off running after it*

Net Strife: I end it at good parts because those are the evilest places to end a chapter at.

Yagami / 0==|=R=a=g=n=a=r=o=k=: No worries, people, I have already successfully beaten Dullahan. I even saved my game in a separate file so I could rematch him. And yes, I used the 'summon like crazy' strategy.

Akachi: Don't worry...she did...

Great Saiyaman formerly known as critic: At the moment, I have no plans to write a Windshipping fic (I decided to leave the strictly romance fics to Midnight C and Triad Orion so I don't absolutely murder the genre), but if enough people start telling me to write something, I suppose I'll have to concur. After all, I write for people, not just my own enjoyment.

MercuryAdept: Wow. My battle sequences were...good? I always thought they were a little...lacking, but thank you very much!

High King Isaac: Yeah, he's an annoying one. At least you don't have to fight him and the Doom Dragon at once, right? Hmm.....

Disclaimer: I own as much of Golden Sun as I do of the Caribbean Islands.

Chapter 10

Multiple Personalities?

"Formina Sage!"

The long beam of plasmetic energy grazed past Gareth, leaving a long, faint burn along where it had scratched him. The battle had been raging back and forth for an hour now, and the Adepts were slowly beginning to succumb to the unpleasantness of fatigue.

"How do we beat him again when he's gotten stronger?" Gareth called, panting.

"We've gotten stronger, too," Felix answered. Gareth nearly fell face first.

"You're comparing us to this guy?" he asked unbelievably.

"Why not?" Isaac asked, dodging a slash of the Bloodlust Katana as he struggled to gain some ground.

"Yeah, we're strong in our own right," Ivan agreed, leaning on his staff as Mia hurried over to him to cast Ply. He had suffered a nasty gash in his leg, and couldn't seem to put any pressure on it.

Deciding the best strategy was to take out the Adepts who caused him the most trouble last time, Dullahan turned his attention primarily to Isaac. It had been this Earth Adept who had slain him before. He managed to sneak off from the battle and gain enough time to summon Charon. The powerful summon had just enough power for Isaac to force Dullahan into the recesses of darkness as he and the others went forward to claim the powerful Iris summon. But this time, the group didn't have as many of their djinn to help them. They couldn't stop him this time! Dullahan swung the Bloodlust Katana again and again, each time only barely missing Isaac, who was dancing in and out, a look of extreme concentration on his face. Isaac didn't even have time to counterattack with this massive assault being focussed entirely on him. A normal Adept would have buckled long since. Mia thanked her lucky stars Isaac was far from normal.

The other Adepts, sensing that Dullahan had lowered his guard to defeat Isaac first, began focussing on their best Psynergy attacks. Finally, after what seemed an eternity to Isaac, they released the most powerful attacks they could muster: Ice Missile, Spark Plasmas, Pyroclasms, and Stone Spire all converged on Dullahan. The attacks exploded on Dullahan's back, with so much force Sheba thought the ceiling would collapse.

But Dullahan did not waver. Even worse, his more powerful regeneration ability healed all of the minor damage these huge attacks inflicted, and he continued his assault.

Meanwhile, Isaac was tiring fast. "Can you guys do anything?" he asked, panting.

"We're trying," Felix called back. "Hold on!"

"Easier said than done," Isaac said, grunting as he got hit by the flat of the Bloodlust Katana's blade. The others gasped as they saw Isaac sink to one knee under the blade's force.

Garet, hoping to distract Dullahan, jumped onto the keeper of light's shoulders and swung at him with his sword.

Mia, hoping to heal Garet, ran over to him after he was flung halfway across the room by Dullahan and collapsed heavily on the floor.

Sheba and Jenna decided to try something, so they each ran to an opposing side of Dullahan. Sheba hit him on one side with Tempest, and Jenna on the other side with Dragon Fume. Dullahan stretched his arms out either way and swatted them away like flies.

With his arms temporarily outstretched and an open shot, Isaac leapt to his feet and stabbed an unusually unprotected Dullahan with the Sol Blade. Dullahan turned to gray ash and dissipated. Isaac sank to his knees and breathed extraordinarily hard. A few moments of silence passed.

"...What?" Felix said softly. "After all of that, do you mean to tell me he falls with one stab?"

"That was not Dullahan," Isaac commented. "He was far too weak."

"I dunno," Gareth groaned. "It felt pretty real to me."

"You mean the wall felt real to you," Jenna said, giving him a weak smile.

"Same difference."

"Are you all right, Sheba?" Mia asked, going over to heal her. She had suffered a nasty bump when Dullahan swatted her away, and Ivan was doing the best he could to heal her with herbs and such.

"I'll be okay," she said. The Adepts who were already on their feet were discussing what had happened, and again, the voice of Dodonpa pierced the room.

"Weak guardian," he mused. "You'd think the so-called keeper of light would be stronger."

"Give it up, Dodonpa," Isaac called. "You're not fooling anybody!" ("Uhh...yeah," Gareth said.) "We know that wasn't Dullahan. So why conjure a fake one?" Dodonpa did not answer.

"You know what I think," Ivan hypothesized from Sheba's side. "I think he doesn't have the strength to revive Dullahan. I think he just made some half-pint re-creation to scare us."

"You might want to watch who you're calling half-pint, there, Ivan," Gareth said under his breath. Ivan scowled at him and shot a Ray at his feet. Gareth jumped and laughed.

"Nevertheless," Felix said, "our adversary was kind enough to leave us something here." He gestured toward the spot where Isaac slew Dullahan, and noticed the Bloodlust Katana laying on the floor. Felix took a few steps over to it, but no

sooner had he begun to approach it than Dodonpa reappeared before him, and took the sword in his hand.

"Stop running from us, coward," Gareth spat, growling.

"Why not?" Dodonpa laughed. "It's ever so much more fun to mock you like this." And Dodonpa disappeared with a puff of smoke. "If you still are interested in finding me, then why don't you come a little deeper into my lair?" he offered. On the far wall, opposite the metal gate that had locked them in the room a short while ago, a door slowly phased into existence, where previously even Ivan and Sheba were sure there was none. Isaac raised an eyebrow at the door, and then looked at his friends.

"Do you want to?" he asked. "No one will care if you back out now," he said to them all. They all looked at him as though he had suddenly taken on the appearance of Kraden. "Oooo-kay. I guess we're all going."

So Isaac lead them through the door. What lay on the other side was very familiar.

"It's the prison system," Ivan whispered. "But it's...empty."

They had entered the halls of cells that once had played host to Master Hammet and Dodonpa himself. The halls and cells were all empty, however. Isaac had supposed that since he had spent so long in a cell, Dodonpa didn't want to have to worry about the prison system any longer. Bad memories, Isaac supposed.

"I guess that he didn't want to worry about maintaining the prison system anymore. Bad memories, I guess," Ivan said.

"Came up with that conclusion all by yourself, did you?" Isaac grimaced at him. Ivan continued walking and began to

whistle.

They were almost at the end of a hall of cells when Sheba stopped walking. "What is it, Sheba?" Mia asked.

"I sense something...a pair of minds..." she said softly. Ivan focussed his senses.

"Me, too...in one of these cells, right?" he asked her. She nodded.

"It looks empty, but..." he trailed. Ivan cast Reveal, but found nothing.

"Another team effort, do you think?" he suggested. Again, Sheba nodded, and the two of them cast a simultaneous Reveal.

And mixed emotions came over the group. In the cell were two people they were quite familiar with.

"Picard!" Jenna exclaimed.

"Dodonpa," Felix growled.

"Is it really you?" Picard rose. He looked at them and began smiling broadly. "I never thought I'd see you here! But then, I never thought I'd see anyone other than a guard here..."

"What is it with you and jails, exactly, Picard?" Sheba giggled.

"What did they lock you up for this time?" Jenna asked.

"Well, I thought that if I wanted to find you all, I'd have to come here, because you would all get here eventually," he said. "But...well, let's just say the Lunpean's weren't so thrilled to see me."

"Doesn't matter," Felix said, still grounded. "What matters is, what are you doing with him?" Felix asked, pointing at Dodonpa. Dodonpa looked frightened, and a little thinner and weaker than the version they had just seen.

"I can assure you, it's a long and complicated story," Picard said. Dodonpa nodded.

"The person whom you captured and imprisoned is I," Dodonpa said. "My father, Donpa, locked me up here because I was not suited to lead this town. I concur that I was not.

"However, once my mind was clear and I was able to lead again, my father gave me the benefit of the doubt and decided to release me. Unfortunately, the moment my father went to turn the key to unlock this door, he was murdered from behind. Someone shot a crossbow bolt at him, and it killed him instantly.

"Meanwhile, this man, Picard, was trying to find you, and stumbled across Lunpa. Not one to fight against innocent people, he graciously decided to wait here after the guards arrested him, having the utmost faith in all of you to find him eventually.

"Unfortunately, neither of us saw the man who killed my father. All I know is that I must be free and stop whoever is leading as me!" Dodonpa took a deep breath, hoping that these travellers would believe him. He recognized Isaac and three of these people easily enough, but the others were new to him. He could only hope Isaac was still as gracious as before.

"Ivan," Isaac said, "can you Mind Read him for me?" Ivan accepted, and went to work pouring over the recesses of

Dodonpa's mind. Dodonpa cringed a little at this strange boy staring intently at him, but didn't move.

"This is the Dodonpa we know, for sure," Ivan stated. "But it doesn't answer why there are two of them now..." Isaac opened the door with a well placed slash of his Sol Blade. The lock broke and the door swung open. Isaac stared at Dodonpa.

"Dodonpa, do you know of anybody who could change shapes of things?" Isaac asked, trying to refer to the Transmute Psynergy but not wanting to end up explaining about Adepts and Alchemy. There was no point in having a war going on and having people start raising questions at the same time. "Maybe make things stronger in the process. Like a magician who shuffles a deck of cards and ends up with bigger cards." Gareth stifled his laughter at his friend's explanation. Isaac reddened a little.

"How would you describe it, Gareth?" Jenna whispered in his ear. "Like a river that gets bigger...?"

"You're never going to let that go, are you?" Gareth asked.

"Nope. Not anytime soon."

"There was one man who could do something similar to that," Dodonpa began. "He claimed to be born under Mars, or...one with Mars or something like that. He said he was here with people, but I can't remember who he said they were..."

"Do you remember his name?" Felix pressed. He seemed a little paler.

"I believe he said his name was..." A soft twanging sound and a puff of smoke behind them went off behind them, and

Dodonpa slumped with a crossbow bolt in his neck, courtesy of the other Dodonpa.

"Mia, can you...?" Isaac began, but she shook her head sadly.

"I don't think so. Something took him down too fast."

"Poison bolts," the living Dodonpa laughed sinisterly.

"What kind of a creep would do that?" Gareth fumed.

"Introducing..." Jenna said, pointing at Dodonpa.

"All right, who are you, really?" Isaac asked. "You've played around long enough. We know that wasn't Dullahan that you sent against us, and we know that you aren't Dodonpa. Who are you?"

"Why, Isaac, do you not remember me?" he asked, in a cold grin.

"How can I, when I don't recognize you?"

"And you, Felix," Dodonpa laughed. "You spent so much time with me, how can you not remember me?"

"Wait a minute..." Felix whispered. Ivan and Jenna stumbled a little.

"There's no way!" Ivan exclaimed.

"You're dead!" Jenna cried.

"Yes, well, you thought the same of little Isaac over there, didn't you?" he laughed, voice no longer sounding like Dodonpa, but rather a demon of their past.

"Wait...I know that voice," Mia said quietly.

"Yes, you do," Dodonpa smiled.

"Even after death you can't let a grudge go, can you?" Gareth grumbled, now catching on.

"Why let it go when I can still have so much fun with you?" he cackled. "Besides, I have never died."

"We've lit the beacons already," Isaac said. "What's this all about? The war, the death, the danger looming over all of Angara brought about by you! What's it for?!"

"What's it for?" he laughed coldly. "This is for the death you almost handed me on top of Venus Lighthouse!! This is for revenge!!"

"Stay out of this," Isaac said to the others. Gareth stepped forward.

"No way. I'm helping you this time," he said, but Isaac placed a hand out to him and halted him. He shook his head, then turned to face the other 'Dodonpa'.

"Bring it on," Isaac said, stepping forward with the Sol Blade, "Saturos."

(Char): Ack!

Ahh...you just can't beat old characters.

(Dew): What is with you and revitalizing the old bad guys?!

They're fun.

(Dew): Dullahan was fun?! And why didn't he put up more of a fight?! I was expecting, like, at least a five page fight scene!

Who said Dullahan was strong?

(Char): 0.0

Let's just say that was a...preview...yes, that's it. A...preview. BWAHAHAHA...

(Char): Ack. He's learned evil laughter.

^ _ ^

(Dew): He still hasn't learned defense, though! *summoning Mercury*

COLD AND WET!

(Dew): ^ _ ^

O-o-o-okay...t-t-t-to the r-r-rest of y-y-y-yo-you...p-p-p-p-please rev-iew and I'll up-d-d-date sooooooon... *sneezing*

***Chapter 11*: Revelations**

You know, between my Physics, Chemistry and Math classes, I have no idea how I'm still able to write one of these a week...

(Dew/Char): *whistling, hopping up behind Omniflyer*

Oh. That's how.

(Dew): Darn right. Don't worry, everybody, we'll make sure he updates with some regularity!

That he will. You should really get a job working as, like, a motivational instructor. You'd make millions.

(Char): We already do.

You get paid for this?!

(Dew): Sure. All muses get paid by Imps to watch over particularly evil authors.

Why do you get paid and I don't?! I'm doing all the work!!

(Char): People like us more. ^_^

V_V* I give up...

Disclaimer: I don't own Microsoft. I mean, Golden Sun. Uhh...and Microsoft. Yes, I...don't own Microsoft....don't.

Don't.

A/N: This chapter switches back and forth between the present and the past. I tried to get some italics working, but my computer hates me, like certain muses I could mention. So, the chapter starts in the past and works from there. I apologize for any confusion.

Chapter 11

Revelations

10 minutes pre-Venus Flare.

It had been a year and a half since the incident atop Mount Aleph, inside the sacred Sol Sanctum.

Inside the Elemental Star Chamber, where the whole quest was set in motion.

Since then, they'd travelled across fields, plains of ice, through mountain ranges and deserts, and climbed two of the legendary Lighthouses of Alchemy.

And they were still atop one, now.

To one side of the lighthouse, Isaac stood, his friends behind him, the people to whom he would give everything and ask

nothing in return, the people who he would fight alongside and defend with his life.

On the other side, Saturos and Menardi of the Fire Clan, standing, holding the Venus Star, ready to toss it into the beacon's pit, but waiting until these nuisances were out of their way.

They would be in for a long wait.

The sound of metal ringing against metal resonated throughout the old prison system. Isaac was struggling for position against the one foe he never thought he would have to face again.

Saturos, disguised as Dodonpa, deflected Isaac's parry-turned-slash, and shoved him away. He leaped back, and emitted a brilliant flash of light, which nearly blinded the other Adept, and when it receded, Saturos stood, in his normal appearance, no longer masquerading as the former leader of Lunpa, but now in his old body. With the hallway too narrow for the other Adept to come beside Isaac, they simply watched as their leader faced off against Saturos. Just as fast and deadly as ever, if not more so, Saturos charged against Isaac, and the two were set again in a deadly battle.

Five minutes pre-Venus Flare.

"This is where it ends for you!" Menardi cried, dashing towards the Adept.

"Saturos is mine!" Isaac cried, taking a weak slash at Menardi as he passed her, who deflected it easily.

"Let me help you," Mia said.

"No," Isaac replied. "Keep an eye out for the other two and stay back; get ready to heal somebody if they need it!" Mia bit her lower lip, as if trying to hold down an argument. Isaac began his duel with Saturos, and she didn't want to distract him

"Well, well," Saturos said, circling with Isaac around a middle point, as though moons around a planet. "After all this time, even this far from Vale, you still chase us? I must admit, your tenacity is quite admirable."

"Yeah, well, we'll just see how much you admire me once I've ended your quest," Isaac said.

"Tsk, tsk," Saturos clucked mockingly, "don't you know how to take a compliment?"

"Not from you," Isaac said, launching himself at Saturos.

"What are you trying to prove, Isaac?" Gareth asked.

"Let us help you!" Jenna called into the fray, but Isaac was too busy to answer them.

"This is crazy, we need to help him!" Mia said worriedly.

"We have to respect his wishes," Felix said.

"Wishes or no, he's going to get himself killed," Picard said.

"If he can hold his own against Dullahan, he can hold his own against Saturos," Felix reasoned.

"That wasn't Dullahan," Ivan said, keeping a firm grip on his staff. "That was just an imitation."

"Yeah, a half-pint," Gareth joked. Ivan grimaced at him.

"I'm not waiting anymore," Mia said. "We have to help him!"

"As appreciated as the thought is," Isaac called back, "it's not necessary."

"Yet," Mia said darkly. "Remember what happened last time you said that?"

Three minutes pre-Venus Flare.

"As appreciated as the thought it," Isaac called back, "it's not necessary." Mia wavered, poised between listening to Isaac and going to help Gareth and Ivan with Menardi when Saturos got the chance he was looking for and hit Isaac with a huge slash. Isaac crumpled to the Aerie floor.

"No!" Mia cried. "Isaac!" Saturos ginned maliciously at her and laughed, but was quickly silenced by a flurry of Ice Missile attacks that left him quite winded and injured.

Mia dashed over to Isaac and focussed all of her energy into Ply. A blue aura surrounded her entire body instead of only her hands, and instead of the normal fairy that floated down to heal the wounded, a whole crowd of the winged creatures floated down to the ground to assist Mia in her purest hope to heal Isaac, and bathed him in the light of Mercury and healed him totally.

And Mia realized she had learned the power of Pure Ply.

"You needed my help before, Isaac!" Mia said. But Isaac as too busy parrying and countering attacks to reply. Isaac danced around Saturos' thrust and slapped his hand with the flat of the Sol Blade. Saturos dropped the Bloodlust Katana. Isaac pointed the Sol Blade at Saturos' throat.

"Don't move. You're going to pay for this war for a long time," Isaac said quietly. Saturos just laughed.

"You fool. Didn't I tell you about the power of Transmute Psynergy?" he laughed.

"All you got was some fancy sword that didn't help you at all. Big deal," Gareth said.

"I got a lot more than that," Saturos said, looking at the Katana on the floor. "I got a weapon that doesn't need me for it's power." Suddenly the fire in the metal intensified in power, and it released a large explosion of plasmatic fire that struck Isaac directly, before he had any time to prepare a defence. Isaac slumped to the floor, bleeding and burned badly. "Case in point."

"Isaac!" the others cried, and Mia rushed over to him to cast Pure Ply. Gareth leaped over both of them, unsheathing his Murasama. The cursed spirit of the Murasama revealed itself, and tried to curse Gareth. However, his Cleric's Ring absorbed the spirit, and Gareth drew the sword successfully with no ill effects. Gareth started muscling with Saturos for position, who raised the Bloodlust Katana again and simply laughed.

Meanwhile, Mia was healing Isaac with Pure Ply and enlisting Picard's and Felix's help to carry him off away from Saturos.

"You never change, you know that, Isaac?" Mia said softly to him. "This is the same thing you did to me last time you fought Saturos..."

"At least...I'm consistent," Isaac groaned, and slowly took her hand. She squeezed it back and tried to help Picard and Felix get him out of the prisons as fast as possible. Ivan, Sheba and Jenna led the way, and Gareth was holding off Saturos as well as he could while trying to keep sight of the others.

Finally, as soon as the others had Isaac clear of the hallway in which Saturos was still fighting, Gareth leaped back and dropped a Smoke Bomb to temporarily befuddle Saturos. While Saturos was trying to regain his senses, Gareth hightailed it for the others, and they all ran as quickly they could through the corridors looking for the exit, slowed by the recovering Isaac. Mia was still trying her Pure Ply every couple of steps (Isaac didn't even know how she was using it so often).

The group was running (or hobbling, in Isaac's case, thanks to the unrelenting Pure Plies from Mia) when Saturos' voice rang throughout the hallways.

"You fools! Did you honestly think I would let you escape so easily?!" he called.

"Let us escape?" Gareth mocked. "You couldn't have stopped us. I'm too strong for you!"

"Only with cheap items, you Mars Adept wannabe..."

"What?!"

"Why do this, Saturos?!" Isaac cried, trying to ignore the pain of the burns.

"Do you really want to know why, Isaac? You already know..."

12 minutes after the Venus Flare

The Fusion Dragon, the last ditch effort made from the joining of Saturos and Menardi in a weak form of Transmute Psynergy in order to defeat Isaac's party, stumbled to the floor and broke back into Saturos and Menardi.

"I can't believe... we lost," Menardi whispered, and fell into the now half-lit beacon pit. Saturos fell after, and the Adepts turned their attention to Felix and Sheba. But before anyone could move, the lighthouse split in half, and the beacon's power shot up from the recesses of the well, where Saturos and Menardi were falling. The energy shot up and engulfed Menardi, killing her instantly.

But Saturos was falling to the side of the beam. He landed on the bottom of the pit, where the well was curved. But just before he would have rolled into the beacon, the lighthouse split in half due to the sudden onslaught of Venus Alchemical power being unleashed upon the world. Saturos kept falling past the well and the beacon's light and landed at the bottom of the lighthouse behind a statue, just short of where the rising waters were flooding. Everything went black for him.

Saturos woke up to the sound of footsteps and voices.

"Can we not get out?"

"It's flooded."

"Flooded?"

"Totally flooded with water."

"How did that happen?"

"You're the smart one!"

"We'll have to find another way out..."

"That's fine."

Saturos heard the footsteps pass him, and stop to take one last look at the waters just a few feet from him.

He could have reached out and grabbed Isaac.

No. Better to wait and strike back later.

Wait for revenge.

"I can't believe it," Gareth said quietly.

"If only we had been paying more attention..." Ivan trailed off

"You could have killed me there like you killed Menardi," Saturos cackled. "But you didn't, and now...now I get to hurt you where it hurts most." He laughed even louder, as though dipping fully into insanity now. "I strike back at you by striking at your home...we'll see how long you can remain the strong hero when your world is dipped into darkness. When all around you is lost and you finally let go, Isaac of Vale...that's when you will die for good!!" And the laughter receded into nothingness.

"Talk about a sucky piece of news," Gareth said softly.

"Doesn't matter," Felix said. "We'll just have to end this war faster. We need to stop this from carrying on."

"How do we stop it?" Picard wondered. "If we can't deliver Dodonpa, or at least the fake Dodonpa to Lunpa, then they'll continue this war until either they win, or they're defeated. They won't stop now!" The Adepts travelled in silence, pondering this newest revelation.

"There must be something we're overlooking," Sheba said. "Something simple."

"Let's worry about it once we're free of Lunpa," Mia said. "We need to get out of here while we can."

So the Adepts left the castle, Cloak up, and wondered what they could do now. They reached the outskirts of Lunpa and retreated in the caravans just as Sol was rising, and just six hours away from the beginning of the second battle.

It was going to be another long day.

Are you happy now? I gave you an update without a cliffhanger.

(Dew): The looming threat of war doesn't count as a cliffhanger?

Not really. I mean, there are far worse things I'm going to do.

(Char): ... going to?

Uh...no...I mean...

(Char): ...

To the rest of you (I should end this before they hurt me...),
please review.

(Dew): *laughing* It's funny because you said before I hurt
you...

***Chapter 12*: Battle, Again**

Enter the twelfth chapter. Wow, I had no idea when I started this that people would actually like it!

(Dew): That goes double for me. I don't know how people can like this! I mean, it's not like you can write well...

Ok, Dew.

(Dew): ...or have any special writing skill...

Ok, Dew.

(Dew): ...or have good plot ideas...

OK, Dew...

(Dew): ...or have anything in particular that makes this better than your average fic.

...

(Char): Oh, wait, you have us! That's what makes it better than your average fic!

...I'm going to start the chapter before I do something I may regret...

Some of you may be wondering why I'm posting after just two days... there are three reasons to that. Firstly, I just won an academic award for my grade 10 year, so I'm happy!

HAPPY! And hence, I want to write and make other people happy!

Second, Vanilla Coke. Just got some more and...well, you all know what that does.

Thirdly, there are some real eyesores on the front page of the GS section that haven't been removed yet, at least when I'm writing this...they're really stupid (for Really Stupid, hereafter referred to as RS). Anyway, these RS things are making the whole section look stupid, so I'm posting to push them farther down the page until they're on the second page and no one who loads the page has to see this RS crap. Everybody happy with that?

Review Responses:

Ivan of Vault: The old bad guys are awesome, man. Plus, I had a way to bring him back.

Void: Yeah, I know, I hated it too. If anyone can tell me how to post with italics, please let me know, okay?

Midnight C: Menardi? Back? Hmm.... Just kidding! ^_^
...maybe.

Net Strife: I hope I can satisfy your lust for long chapters with this one...

Akachi: No more cliffs? Uhhh.. You might not want to read this chapter...

Disclaimer: You know, there's a point where you can't say this in a witty or amusing manner any longer. I've reached that point. I don't own Golden Sun.

A/N: CLIFFHANGER AT THE END OF CHAPTER. Read at YOUR OWN RISK.

Chapter 12

Battle, Again

"I wish we could get just one break, once," Gareth said.

"Not likely," Isaac replied. "And this day is going to get a lot worse before it gets better."

"There's Vault," Felix said, as the city came into view.

"What time is it?" Jenna wondered.

"Sol's only just risen," Ivan said. "Five hours."

"Five hours," she repeated.

"This time, we make sure to stay together," Sheba said.

"Got that?" Mia glared at Isaac. He smiled.

"I'll be by your side the whole time." Jenna and Gareth looked at each other and smiled.

"Awwwwww," they laughed.

"Sometimes I think they flirt worse than you do," Ivan said to Isaac. Gareth reddened.

"Garet," Felix mumbled. "Why not somebody respectable, like Picard?" he said quietly. Picard looked at him, red.

"Why me?" he whispered.

"Why Gareth?" he replied.

"Point taken," Picard said, as Gareth tripped over Jenna's well-placed staff.

It was mid-morning as the Adepts settled in a meadow outside what would become the battlefield. Gareth and Jenna sat around the cooking fire, Jenna trying to prepare a brunch of sorts, and Gareth trying to stay near Jenna. Jenna was just about to put some meat on the fire when Gareth stood up and knocked it out of her hands. It fell into the sandy terrain, and was covered in dirt, ruined.

"Garet, you oaf!" Jenna cried, rounding on him. Gareth outstretched his arms in a sign of apology.

"I'm sorry, Jenna! I'm really sorry!"

"That was supposed to be our food!" she said accusingly.
"Now what are we supposed to eat?!"

"Uh...I'm sure we can find something!" he begged.

"Like?!"

"Maybe we can catch some fish?"

"Good idea," Jenna smiled, grabbing Gareth by the arm and dragging him to the river which ran nearby.

"Don't we need fishing gear of some sort?" Gareth asked.

"You like the current so much, you should be able to get some fish to come to you," Jenna said.

"What?! No! No! I hate water! Isaac! Help me, bud! Isaac! Save me from her!" Gareth cried, to no avail.

"Sorry, Gareth," Jenna said, "where you're going, Isaac can't help you!"

"Ahh!" Gareth cried, somewhat melodramatically, and they soon were far away enough from the camp that their argument couldn't be heard.

Meanwhile, Felix and Picard sat perched on some rocks a short distance from the fire. Picard shook his head at the retreating Mars Adepts and chuckled.

"He makes her happy, at least," Picard smiled. Felix closed his eyes, and would have crossed his arms if they weren't already crossed.

"Hmph," Felix muttered.

"And that makes you happy, doesn't it, Felix?" Picard pried. Felix didn't reply. "Admit it," Picard said, "as much as you can't believe it, your sister likes him, and you like him for making her happy."

"Poor Gareth," Felix said after some while. Picard looked at him. "He has no idea what he's getting into." Picard laughed.

"I think he knows exactly what he's getting into," Picard said. Felix nodded.

"One deep river."

Under the shade of a rather large oak tree, Isaac and Mia lay quite still and quietly, content to be in each other's company.

Isaac started thinking about the last time he had been in battle like what he would soon face. The unexpectedness of it all; the death surrounding him; the pain, the suffering, the injury; being alone, and falling in battle.

What was the driving factor? What instinct told him to fight, even when he would like nothing more than to stay home in peace?

And suddenly, an image, of far away. A memory so faded it was difficult to see. Isaac wasn't even sure it was even him that experienced it.

He was looking down from a ceiling. Beneath him someone cried and hit someone else with a staff.

But the other person didn't move. He just grabbed her and threw her against a wall, partially strangling her. He drew his sword and thrust at her heart.

And the memory froze. He couldn't let this happen, could he? No, Isaac had to stop this!

And he leaped down from the ceiling and drew his sword. He slashed at the person and he fell and greyed out. And the

girl stood, spared from the danger that confronted her. The memory ended.

And Isaac remembered why he was fighting. He remembered what it was that drove him, that told him no matter what he had to fight for.

She was laying on his arm.

The pair of young Wind Adepts were sitting atop a hill, letting the wind blow their hair and caress their cloaks, enjoying the morning breeze and hoping it would not be their last.

'Do you think we'll get out of this one better than we did last time?' Sheba asked to his mind.

'I hope so,' Ivan said. 'I'd hate to lose someone else.'

'Not someone else,' Sheba said. 'We never lost anyone.'

'Right,' Ivan said. 'Let's hope that doesn't change.' Sheba chuckled.

'We have Mia with us this time. You know she isn't going to let Isaac out of her sight.'

'Point taken,' Ivan said. 'Same with Jenna and Gareth this time around, I'd expect.'

'And same with us,' Sheba looked at him warmly. Ivan nodded.

'Same with us.'

The sound of rolling thunder was heard in the distance.

And soon, the sight of an army appeared along with it.

The second battle between Dodonpa's army and Kalay's Defence was about to begin.

After a morning of relaxation and reminiscing, not to mention a nice fish lunch provided by Gareth, the Adepts found themselves overlooking the battlefield. The armies were terribly close now, and it appeared as though they would finally meet in less than a minute.

"So are we going to try the same thing we did last time?" Ivan said. "Because that didn't really have the best results."

"Regardless, the plan is the same again. We break them up, and with a bit of luck, we'll have a day until the next battle to end this," Isaac said. "Besides, I have some Water of Life in case someone falls, so we shouldn't need to worry as much this time."

"I still don't want to force you to use it," Gareth said.

"Ditto," Jenna nodded.

"Then let's go," Felix said. The Adepts leaped from the sidelines and ran forward. Just before they would reach the main battle, Mia pulled at Isaac's tunic.

"Is there anything I should know about this?" Mia asked him. "I haven't done this yet, and it sounds horrible." She looked at him worriedly. "What do I need to know?"

"I'll be watching over you the whole time," Isaac said. She blushed, and nodded.

Ivan and Sheba, being the fastest, were the first on the field. Not wasting time this time around, they began firing Tornados into the enemy ranks, trying to slow them up. Unfortunately, they couldn't stop enough of the rows, and the armies joined.

"How long can you keep firing Tornados?" Ivan called to Sheba.

"How long do you need me to?" she retorted.

"However long you can."

"Deal."

At the same time, Felix and Picard were dancing in and out of soldiers, dropping one after the other.

"This is terrible," Picard kept whispering.

"Not the most pleasant of things, is it?" Felix asked.

"When you live to be as old as I am, you learn to appreciate life," Picard said. "This is a gross use for everything I've learned about life."

"And then, this may be just the thing about life that people wait for," Felix said, ducking under a slash from a soldier and retaliating with his own.

"What do you mean?" Picard asked.

"Maybe all anybody needs to make life worthwhile is something to stand up for and defend," Felix said.

"Something to rise up and fight for, with all their hearts and souls, like these people are."

"Wow," Picard said.

"What?"

"You're starting to sound way too much like Isaac."

"It's scaring me, too."

Meanwhile, Isaac, Mia, Gareth and Jenna were all off fighting together. Isaac was keeping a very close watch on Mia, and Gareth on Jenna. Of course, they kept close eyes on those two even when they weren't in potential danger.

"So you just want us to drop them, right, Isaac?" Gareth asked.

"If you can help it," he replied. "Don't put yourself in any unnecessary danger." He spun around close to Mia. "That goes double for you," he whispered. Mia responded by raising her Meditation Rod and smacking a soldier's lights out.

Jenna was watching Gareth's back, as the warrior Mars Adept was often prone to forgetting to watch his own. It came as a total surprise, therefore, when he came darting past her and slashed a soldier that was sneaking up on her.

"And here I was thinking you couldn't watch someone's back," Jenna looked at him.

"Some backs are nicer than others," he smirked.

Isaac and Mia, meanwhile, were back to back, and striking out with staff and flat of blade.

"Getting tired?" Mia panted.

"Not at all," he replied. "Are you?"

"If I can handle walking across continents, I should be okay for now," she said. And suddenly, a scream and a cry came from beside them.

"Jenna!" Gareth cried. Isaac turned and saw Jenna fall with a fatal sword wound in her. Before Mia could even react, Jenna fell, dead. Gareth turned to face Isaac.

"Isaac!" he cried, desperate. "Can you...Revive her...? Please?!"

"I can't Revive," he responded. "I've only got one djinni Set to me." Gareth mouthed wordlessly. "I've the Water, though." Gareth sighed.

Isaac fumbled for it, but before he could get it, he heard a cry from behind him, and saw, much in a similar fashion, Mia fall to the ground with a sword in her chest, dead.

"Mia!" Isaac cried.

"Oh, no," Gareth said. "Oh, please, no." Isaac ignored the battle raging around him, and focussed totally on the Water of Life in his hands.

"I...can't save them both..."

"Isaac," Gareth said, choking on the words, lowering his gaze. "Do what your heart tells you," he said, resigned to knowing

that his friend would rather save his love than the love of his best friend.

And as Isaac thought it over, he knew that he wanted to save Mia, too.

But the more he thought about it, about which one he wanted to save...

He knew it couldn't be Mia.

"Garet," Isaac said, head down, tears falling down his face. Garet turned to face him. Isaac tossed the Water of Life towards him. Garet stared at him, blinking.

"I...Isaac, I..."

"Just shut up and use it!!" Isaac burst. Garet spilled the water over Jenna and her eyes fluttered open.

And Isaac sunk to his knees over Mia, looking at her still body, still bleeding, and felt himself break.

(Dew): Oh, come ON!

I need to end chapters eventually, you know!

(Char): But that...you ended it... GAH!

That's what the reviewers are going to say, in addition to death threats and such. *looking at the reviewers* Geez, you're not going to be nice one bit, are you?

(Char): I would normally hurt you, but I'll leave that up to the reviewers. Reviewers, you have my total permission to

MAUL HIM IN ANY WAY YOU WANT.

AAACK!!!!

***Chapter 13*: From the Ashes**

Chapter 13 already.

(Char): Stop talking! Write the chapter!

But I have reviewers to respond to!

(Dew): All they want is the chapter; WRITE.

But...

(Char): Write or I get very mean. *begins to glow in an eerie crimson aura*

All right, I'll start writing. My review responses.

(Dew): *begins glowing an eerie turquoise aura* Fast.

Review Responses:

Midnight C: Hmm...Apparently you don't like Mia dying. I'll keep that in mind for future cliffhangers/death wishes.

0==|=R=a=g=n=a=r=o=k= : Evil...was...good?! You know, I might need some protection from other authors/muses if you're interested...

Void: What else, indeed?

Akachi: *smoking* ...ow.

Kevin C: Recovering? Who said they were even in the story?
[(Dew): Get me in there!!]

Knightblazer 88: It's true. I think most of the cliffs in the section are in some way taught/inspired by those two. Everyone get that? Take out your rage on them! THEM! Leave me alone!! Oh, and as for the Tomegathericon... well, you know Jenna and Garet like to burn things, right?

Lumino: ^_^ I'm extremely happy that I managed to bring out emotion for you. That's one of the key aspirations for a writer, I think. Thanks for letting me know! ^_^

Great Saiyaman ...etc.: A little Windshipping, huh? I don't know if I can really write romance well, but I might try later on. *shrugs* You never know...

Ivan of Vault: Thank you!

Net Strife: Because cliffhangers are fun! (For me...)

Isaac says Booga/SweetSixteen5: You both thought up similar ways out (dividing the Water of Life), but that's really not an option. Can I split the Sol Blade to equip both Isaac and Felix? Can I use a Psynergy Crystal to restore both Sheba's and Ivan's PP? Nope. Just as I can't use one Water of Life to revive Mia and Jenna.

Disclaimer: Amazingly, I don't own Golden Sun. Wow. Get over it.

The battle continued to rage. The grass was stained a terrible deep crimson, and the sounds of death and destruction echoed in everyone's mind.

Everyone except one.

The Champion and Defender of Venus, Hero of Vale and one of the eight Saviours of Weyard now was down on his knees, tears slowly tripping down his cheek for Mia, who lay dead in his arms.

Garet and the newly risen Jenna stood protectively over them, ensuring that Isaac could grieve and do what he need to do without interruption from the other soldiers.

"Can't you...do something?" Garet asked him.

"What am I supposed to do?" Isaac said to him, so silently they barely heard it over the roar of the battle.

"Can't you...Revive her or something?" Jenna asked meekly, knocking a sword away with her staff.

"I asked him that about you," Garet said. "He can't Revive unless he has enough djinn Set to him. And he only has Flint..."

"But Felix has Petra!" Jenna exclaimed.

"It's not enough," Isaac said, head bowed.

"At least...we can get her out of here," Garet said. "Give her a...proper burial or something...?"

"Go," Isaac said.

"What?" Jenna asked.

"Just go."

"We can't..."

"Leave me here. If I cannot be with Mia...then I will die with her here."

"You can't...you can't be serious!" Gareth stumbled.

"Get the others and get out of here!" Isaac burst. "Save yourselves and get out of this... this hellhole! It isn't worth losing your life here. Just... just get out of here, and forget about me..." Gareth promptly spun around and slapped Isaac with his free hand.

"Will you get a hold of yourself?!" he demanded. "We can't just leave you to die!"

"Can't you just try to bring her back?" Jenna asked.

"I can't use Revive, for the last time!" Isaac exclaimed.

"I'm not talking about Revive!" she said. "Don't you remember that puppet of you? The puppet that still had feelings to protect Mia, even when he didn't have a soul, when he was just a shadow of you?"

"What of it?"

"That puppet wasn't any part of you, but it still felt compelled to protect her. And if the fake you can protect Mia," Jenna said worriedly, "then the real you must be able to bring her back!"

"But...I..."

"Just do it!" Gareth exclaimed. "What do you have to lose!?"

At that, Isaac finally realized that he had to try. He had made a promise to Mia to always be there for her, and the only way he could keep that was to try to bring her back.

Closing his eyes, Isaac began to focus all of his Psynergy, all of his power. He let it flow about him, and soon, the young warrior was glowing with the golden light of Venus.

"This is it..." Jenna whispered. It seemed as though the battle around them was slowing down. The soldiers were slowly being captivated by the warmth they felt emanating from Isaac.

"You can do it, Isaac," Gareth said. "Saturos said he was going to defeat you by removing everything you held dear from you. Prove to him... prove that he can't!"

Isaac felt his power beginning to tap out, and he felt like he was beginning to reach the limits of his power, but he knew that wasn't enough.

He took Mia's lifeless hand, and tried to dig even deeper. He felt his power suddenly increase, and realized that his own healing powers weren't totally his own anymore. He could feel the power of Mercury flow into him, as if Mia's spirit was looming over him, giving him strength and begging him to bring her back to him.

"Mia..."

Finally, Isaac found the last deposit of power that lay deep within himself. He called on it to help him, and his power jumped again. He was glowing such a powerful shade, a mix of yellow and blue, but not quite a green. The light he let off blinded the soldiers, and they slowly began to draw back.

And Isaac slowly focussed all of his power into his palm, and turned it over onto Mia. It poured off of him like water and spilled over her body.

The moment the energy touched her, a huge explosion went off. The energy burst into and then from Mia, and it expanded into a huge dome that blew everyone but Isaac and Mia a large distance away.

And from off in the distance at the edge of the explosion, if anyone could stand to look into the brightness that came from it, they could have seen two figures, standing and in a long embrace.

"What was that, sir?" called a Lunpean Lieutenant.

"I don't know, but I don't like it. Call the troops back! There'll always be another day to defeat the enemy," the Captain replied.

"Yes, sir!" he said. And to the troops, he called, "Retreat!!"

"Thank you, Isaac."

He didn't reply, he just looked her in the eyes for a long, long time.

"What was that?" Sheba worried, after being knocked back from the force of the revival. "I hope the others are okay...Oh, Ivan! Where are you Ivan?!"

"Are you wondering why you had such a soft landing?" Ivan mumbled.

"Huh? Ivan!"

"Can you get off of me, now?"

Felix and Picard ran into Gareth and Jenna along the westward side of the battlefield. The armies had parted, with the Lunpeans in full retreat, and the Kalay forces breathing quite deeply.

"What happened out there?" Picard asked.

"Well, Jenna died..." Gareth began.

"She what?!" Felix demanded, turning intensely upon Gareth.
"You let her..."

Jenna sighed and rolled her eyes. Between Gareth and Felix, this could take a while.

"Where do you think the others are?" Mia asked Isaac, seeming to be perfectly healthy after Isaac's very exhaustive revival spell. Isaac wiped the sweat off of his brow and breathed heavily before answering.

"If I had to guess, I'd say they all ended up where we set up camp this morning," Isaac said.

"So that's...which direction?"

"It's looks like West, from here," Isaac replied. A little smoke went off near them, and Isaac neared slowly to look at it.

"It's funny, though, how you won't be going anywhere ever again," laughed an all too familiar voice.

"Not again," Mia moaned.

"Saturos, I am getting really tired of this," Isaac said, voice rising and Sol Blade already in hand. Isaac turned to face him. Saturos snickered and raised the Bloodlust Katana.

"That's really too bad," he laughed at them. "Because your day isn't over by a long shot!"

"Here we go again," Isaac said.

He was exhausted from the battle and the revival spell, but Isaac knew he could end it all if he just stopped Saturos now. Mia didn't like that idea at all.

"Isaac, you can't beat him now!" she exclaimed. "You're exhausted, and I can't cure fatigue!"

"I'll be fine," he said, but Mia noticed he was even having trouble raising the Sol Blade. When he finally lifted it, it didn't give off its normal comforting golden aura, but rather a dull brown. She bit her lip, so as not to reveal this to Saturos, but he noticed anyway.

"Don't be a fool, boy," Saturos grinned. "A fine match for me you'll be if you can barely wield that sword. This will be fun..."

"You sadistic..." Mia said through gritted teeth. "I'm not letting you fight alone, Isaac."

"As appreciated as the tho..."

"Remember what happened the last two times you said that?" Mia glared at him. Isaac promptly stopped talking, looked at her and smirked.

"At least I'm consistent..."

Saturos took the liberty of making the first move, and charged at Isaac with the Bloodlust Katana at the ready. Isaac managed to perform the block, but he wavered under the strength of Saturos and fell to his knees.

"You can't defeat me, you insolent punk," Saturos spat at him, literally. Isaac wiped the offending liquid from his face. "I am stronger than you can ever hope to be."

"We'll see," Isaac said. "One great battle was already fought here today, and one more shall be concluded as well."

"Yes, you're quite correct. But it will not be ended in the way you want it to be. Prepare to die!" Saturos charged the Bloodlust Katana again, and it howled with dark energy, and unleashed its torrent of powerful plasmatic energy like it had in the prison system. Thankfully, just before the attack got underway, Mia managed to knock the sword upward with her staff, and the energy shot up harmlessly towards the heavens.

Which, Mia realized, made for a very effective signal.

"Look!" Jenna said, trying to break up the fight between Garet and Felix, which had been going strong for the past twenty minutes or so.

"Is that...?" Garet wondered.

"That's the same attack Isaac was hit with when he fought..." Picard trailed.

"Saturos!!" Felix said, dashing off in the direction of the signal.

"Never a moment's rest," Gareth muttered.

"What are we going to do now, Ivan?" Sheba wondered.

"I suppose we'll have to look for the others," Ivan said. "I hope they're all right. That explosion attack was amazingly powerful."

"It didn't feel like an attack, though," Sheba recalled.

"You know, in some strange way, it reminded me of Isaac," he said.

"Really?" Sheba said. "I could have sworn I felt a little bit of Mia's power in there..." Ivan groaned, and Sheba's eyes widened.

"Are you thinking what I'm thinking?" Ivan asked.

"I don't know, let me find out." Sheba cast a quick Mind Read. "Yep, exactly the same thing." Suddenly a large plasmatic beam shot up from the ground.

"Are you thinking the same thing I'm thinking about that?" Ivan asked.

"I don't think I even need to Mind Read to say yes, this time," she replied, not looking at him.

"Let's go, then," Ivan said. "You'd think we could catch a break once, wouldn't you?"

Saturos was feeling quite cocky. He was in a very good mood. After all, the only warrior who could ever stand a chance to defeat him was now too weak to defend himself, and the girl was no more than a minor threat, albeit a potentially dangerous one with Mercury Psynergy.

He had the best weapon, his enemy isolated and weak, and soon he would have his enemy's travelling companions dead, also. What a good day!

'So why do these other adepts have to show up and ruin it?' he wondered, as the other six showed up one by one to aid their falling leader. And then he looked up and realized that the now receding light of the Bloodlust Katana's attack served as a perfect signal. The Mercury girl made a fool of him! She'd have to pay for that...

But not now. Better to set another trap and wait.

And Saturos focussed his energy and disappeared in a flash of smoke, leaving the other Adepts to lick their wounds.

Isaac looked up to see Saturos leap away from him, and disappear in a flash of smoke. And slowly looking behind him, he saw his friends coming.

Garet walked up to him slowly, and helped him to his feet.

"You know, when I said you should try to Revive Mia, I didn't mean to blast us in all directions, too."

"It worked didn't it?" Isaac smiled, looking over at his friends and Mia, all looking quite happy and most certainly alive.

"Yeah, but I've got twigs and dirt in places I didn't even know I had..." he replied.

(Dew): AH!

What?

(Char): AH!

What IS it with you two?!

(Char): It's.... it's...!

(Dew): It's not a cliffhanger!

So I'm a gracious, nice person!

(Dew/Char): ...

...?

(Dew/Char): A-HAH-HAH-HAH-HAH-HAH!!

...I get no respect.

(Dew/Char): *nodding*

OK, to the rest of you, I was nice enough to NOT cliffhang this time (and if you thought this was a cliffhanger, don't read the next chapters), so can you please be nice enough to review? Please? Come on, there's sugar in it for you! (I

apologize to all authors in advance for what their muses
may do with this.)

***Chapter 14*: Enter the Lion's Den**

(Char): Is it over yet?

(Dew): I was hoping that many, many chapters ago.

You two are just so nice to me. What would I do without you?

(Char): Wither up and die, I suppose.

It would be a happy death...

(Dew): Too bad...I always hoped I could give you a...you know, not nice death.

Why, Dew, I think you're actually being sentimental!

(Dew): ...no, I'm not!

^_^ I think you are!

(Dew): I think *SMACK*.

Ow.

(Char): ^_^ I like the way we think alike! *SMACK*

Ow x 2. I should propose that for every time I get hit by these two, I set my next update back a couple of days. Hey, that might work!

(Dew): Doubtful.

(Char): *nodding* We'd just get more time and reason to beat on you.

...Point taken.

(Char): Whatever happened to all that sugar you gave away?

The authors didn't like it. The muses did, but the authors didn't.

(Dew): So what are you going to do about it?

Oh....nothing.

(Char): Hey, what are all these boxes labelled 'Pixie Stix' and 'Vanilla Coke' doing here?

I'll be writing now!!

Review Responses:

Void: I could have left Mia dead, I know, but doesn't everyone like the 'Mia lives' ending more?

Midnight C: MIA's gotten into an unnatural amount of trouble? Hasn't Isaac nearly died twice? (Three times if you count being broken...) Make you a deal: You look after Mia's well being, and I will continue to try and kill Isaac... I mean... uhh...

EchoKazul: Your muse is a scrunchy?! 10 gold points for innovation!

Knightblazer 88: Yes and Yes, respectively.

Akachi: GAH! *bolts door* I just got him out of the house. You keep him!!

Kevin C: Who said Mia was dumb??

Great Saiyaman ...etc.: I'll leave that up to your imagination.
I want to leave a little room for creativity...

Isaac says Booga: GET OUT!! *throws Gasp and Zephyr
away* I already HAVE TWO MUSES!! WHY do people send
their muses at me? I didn't even cliffhang this time!! You
people are asking for it...

Dragoon Knight: It's coming...it's coming...It's here!

Lumino: Coming it is!

Disclaimer: 14 Chapters, 14 Disclaimers. I don't own Golden
Sun, nor would I want to, simply because then I would be
responsible for getting GS3 out, and if the plot of GS3 is
anywhere near close to this ((Dew): monstrosity) ...then the
other authors would just absolutely murder me for messing
with the greatest handheld game in existence. Wow, that's a
long disclaimer. I don't think I've ever written...

((Dew)): GET ON WITH IT!

I'm going, I'm going....

Chapter 14

Enter the Lion's Den

Sol was slowly setting over the scarlet-tinted battlefield as the weary group of Adepts made their way to Bilibin. With the injured in tow again, the Adepts were slowly wandering towards the healing station. Some were going a little faster than others. Namely, Isaac and Mia were straggling behind the large group, but then, no one was surprised about that.

"How wonderful," Sheba gushed to Ivan, looking far behind them at Isaac and Mia. "Isn't it great? We could have lost them both by now if they weren't so devoted to the other." Ivan merely smiled and nodded.

"You're a hopeless romantic, aren't you?" he smiled.

"Maybe I am," she said. "Maybe I'm not." Ivan closed his eyes, and a purple light enveloped him.

"Nope," he said. "You definitely are." Sheba simply smiled and leaned against him as they walked.

Meanwhile, Felix and Picard were guiding the whole group from the front of the line. Felix took a look over at the couples that had slowly come out as a result of their years of adventuring, specifically Jenna and Garet, and simply shook his head. Picard noticed.

"What's so bad about that?" Picard asked him. Felix looked ahead and kept walking.

"There are many other things we should be doing right now," he replied. "That includes watching out for the occasional monster or deciding how we're going to stop Saturos. We

can't do that if we're so absorbed each other we can't see where we're going," he added, pointing at Garet, who had just tripped over a rock because he was paying too much attention to Jenna.

"There are many other things we can't do without each other," Picard said. "If we didn't have each other here, we wouldn't still have Isaac, or Mia, or even Jenna." Felix flinched. "As much as you hate to admit it, you owe Jenna's life to Garet." Felix shuddered. "Mind you, it's not as if you didn't already know that. I mean, we all know you're secretly quite fond of Garet." Felix blushed. "Really, it's quite..."

"That's enough! Picard..." Felix said, quite louder than necessary.

"Just thinking out loud," the Lemurian smiled, continuing on his way. "But in all seriousness, we couldn't do this without each other, and you know that."

"Maybe so, but..."

"No. No maybes," Picard interrupted him. "We just couldn't do this. It's our friendship with each other, our united strength and our willingness to fight for our common goals, not to mention our power from the closer relations in our group, as evidenced earlier today by Isaac and Mia, that allows us to be who we are, do what we do, and win." Felix looked at him.

"And you said I was starting to sound like Isaac..."

The next morning, the group was just a short distance from Bilibin. They had camped out just beyond the mountain range, and were prepared to move out quite early. As they

progressed, dark storm clouds began to gather, and the threat of rain slowly began to rise. Isaac wished all the threats he had faced over the last couple of days were so similar in their severity.

Felix and Picard were the first over the last rise that blocked their view from Bilibin. They were also the first to step backwards at what they saw.

Isaac and Mia quickened their pace from the back of the line, and reached the others within a few moments.

But after what they saw, they wished they hadn't.

The healing station was just as the Adepts remembered it, but as for Bilibin itself, it lay smoldering behind it. The buildings were crushed, rubble decorating the ground. Not a sound came from the city. The populace had either deserted the city, or there was no populace to desert it anymore.

"Sheba," Jenna asked shakily. "Tell me I'm not seeing what I think I'm seeing..."

"I can't do that truthfully," she whispered. Tears began to well up in Jenna's eyes. Garek moved quickly to comfort her. Felix's lip twinged.

"Do you think..." Picard began to ask Isaac, but Isaac didn't need him to finish the sentence.

"Saturos..."

"He can't destroy a whole town by himself!" Picard said.

"You've forgotten, he's learned how to recall creatures, now," Isaac reminded him. Mia trembled.

"What kind of creature is strong enough to destroy a town like this, and yet leave the healing station intact?"

"You know..." Isaac said. "A creature that has power unlike any other. A creature that can destroy and destroy, but knows the importance of safety, which is why the safe haven, the healing station, is still intact. And if it knows the value of safety, that means it knows the value of keeping something safe. A creature that was originally meant to protect something. A keeper, of sorts."

"To...protect something?" Ivan said. "You don't think...?" Isaac nodded.

"He's back," Isaac said softly. "For real this time."

Ivan and Felix lead the injured to the healing station, which, to their relief, was still functioning perfectly, albeit with a huge lack of morale and broken spirits everywhere. Of course, that was to be expected, with a broken city behind them.

Apparently, Saturos as Dodonpa lead a sneak attack consisting of himself and Dullahan to the city the previous morning, the morning after Isaac and company escaped from Lunpa. They razed the city, but Dullahan wouldn't kill the innocent or destroy the healing station. Thankfully, Saturos decided not to either, deciding it was more 'fun' to lay waste to the city. The attack ended as soon as it began, but nobody knew where they went when it was over.

While they were doing that, the other Adepts went to explore whatever remained of Bilibin. A very pungent burning smell entered their nostrils, but the Adepts had dealt with worse on their adventure, so they went farther in.

"This smell is terrible," Gareth choked.

"What, are you going to tell me you can't handle a little smell?" Jenna teased him.

"Smell is too polite a word. Stench, maybe. Odour. Maybe, a certain pungency."

"Gotta love that thesaurus, huh, Gareth?" Sheba teased him.

"I swear, between you and Ivan..."

They continued to search in the ruins of Bilibin. What they were searching for was a mystery even to Isaac, but he knew that there had to be something hidden in here. A clue, maybe, as to why Bilibin was razed? No, he knew why; there was a war raging and Bilibin was offering support to Kalay's side through the healing station. They had to pay.

"Isaac!" Mia called out. She was looking around the fallen weapons shop. "I think you're going to want to see this..."

Isaac walked over to where she was, and saw something very familiar lying amongst the debris. It was a metal sword with a dark hilt, and the metal was flickering, as though a fire burned inside of it.

"The Bloodlust Katana..." Isaac whispered. "Why, Saturos...?" He reached down to pick it up, but when he closed his hand around it, his hand clasped on empty air. The sword was there, he could see it, but he just couldn't touch it.

"Why would he leave the sword here for us to see if we can't take it?" Sheba wondered, coming up from behind them.

"I don't think it's the sword he wants us to see," Isaac mumbled. He looked closely at the sword, and then looked

along the blade. He followed the direction it was pointing, as if it were some great arrow.

He walked along the path it was pointing at, and stopped right when he found a small chunk of mineral on the ground. He picked it up, and the Bloodlust Katana faded out of existence, as if it were never there at all.

"What did you do, Isaac?" Mia asked.

"I found something," he said.

"What do you have?" asked Gareth, approaching with Jenna and Picard.

"It looks like a mineral of some sort..."

"A mineral?" Jenna wondered. "But there shouldn't be any minerals here...Bilibin is only interested in lumber from Kolima and things like that."

"Yeah, the closest place that deals with minerals and stuff is..." Gareth paused, trying to remember. "...Altin, isn't it?"

"Altin," Isaac said, turned the stone in his hand, and the word in his mind. "That's where Saturos is, isn't it?"

"It makes sense," Picard said. "He leaves us a clue, and we're supposed to follow it and walk right into his annoying trap."

"Yup," Isaac agreed.

"And we're going to follow the clue and walk into his annoying trap, aren't we?" Gareth asked.

"Yup," Isaac said.

"Typical."

They gathered Ivan and Felix and set out for Altin. The last time they had visited the mining town, water beasts had flooded the city, making it impossible for the citizens to get on with their lives. This time when they arrived, the city was curiously empty.

"I'm getting really tired of seeing nobody when there should be somebody," Gareth complained.

"Better than seeing somebody when there should be nobody," Isaac smiled. Gareth paused to consider this. Jenna furrowed her brow.

"Can't we argue the philosophical points after we get this done?" she grumbled.

"I suppose," Isaac said.

"So do we search the city?" Ivan asked. Felix shook his head.

"The clue he left us was that stone," Felix said. "I think that means he's hiding in the mines." Sheba nodded.

"Plus, it's easier to trap somebody in a narrow passage than out in the open," she added.

"My thoughts exactly," Isaac nodded. They approached the entrance and a large bat flew out and took wing to the sky.

"That was unexpected," Picard said.

"Yeah, really," Mia said.

"Oh, enough waiting," Gareth said. He pointed to the entrance. "To the bat-cave!" The other seven looked at him with very curious stares.

"Why did that feel so... painful?" Ivan wondered, staring at Gareth.

"I... don't know," Sheba said.

The tunnel was dark, damp and cramped. In other words, a perfect place for a Mars Adept to complain, especially a large Mars Adept. Gareth was definitely not having the greatest time.

The tunnel took them through many twists and turns, and eventually they ended up at one of the lower mining halls. There were puddles of water left over from the water beasts, some broken and warped pieces of wood and some mine carts and tracks laying around. From the look of everything, though, it hadn't been used in quite some time.

"Okay, this is weird," Jenna said.

"I know," Sheba shivered. "And I thought Kraden was creepy..."

And then, with no lack of finesse, a great puff of smoke went off in the corner of the room, and Saturos appeared again.

"This is the last time, Saturos," Isaac growled menacingly.

"Come now, Isaac, do you really mean me such a harsh greeting?" Saturos said smoothly.

"Yes, he does," Gareth said.

"I'm hurt," Saturos said. "Poor little Dullahan and I were so bored, we had hoped for just a nice game of cards. But if you insist..."

"You can't call Dullahan here!" Felix exclaimed. "The tunnels are too small and he's too powerful! If you summon him, the entire mountain will collapse upon us!" Saturos laughed bitterly.

"And lucky old me, I can warp instantly," he said. Suddenly dark rings of fire surrounded him, and he began the ritual they had already seen once before. "Last time, you didn't face Dullahan. You faced a mere Mimic in his guise."

"I knew that much," Isaac said, charging at him, desperate to stop the summon.

"But now," he snickered, "now you will get the rematch you wanted!"

"Who said we wanted a rematch?!" Picard yelled.

"I did!" Saturos exclaimed. With a explosion of smoke, he disappeared.

And like last time, another smokescreen went up and slowly began to dissipate. Great amounts of power began to gather, and the roof of the cave began to buckle, with small bits of rock and dirt falling to the ground.

"I am the shadow..."

The mountain trembled.

"It can't be..." Felix whispered.

"...the keeper of light..."

Mia went to Isaac's side.

"What are we going to do?" Jenna worried.

"Ye who hold the sun's power..."

"This is it, isn't it?" Mia asked softly.

The mountain shook.

"Relinquish it now!!!"

"I wanted you to know, Mia..." Isaac said. "I... lo-"

The mountain collapsed!

(Char): WHAT?!

(Dew): YOU CAN'T BE SERIOUS!

Well, I mean, I didn't cliffhang last time. I figured I was saving one up...

(Char): That's just evil beyond all comprehension!

(Dew): That's sick and twisted!

^_^ I know. Well, there are a lot of authors on this site who've indirectly taught this to me.

(Dew): ...great, now they're learning from each other.

(Char): There's got to be some way to stop them.

(Dew/Char): *scheming*

Oh, great. Now I'm scared.

Actually, I'm scared of what you people are going to do to me. So, uh...review! ...Nicely! ...Without pain! ...That includes the muses!

(Dew/Char): *SMACK*

FUUN-gah....

(Dew): ...FUUN?

(Char): ...gah?

^_^;; uh.... hehehe.... Maybe the muses will attack...regardless...Oh, it's gonna be a loooong time until next chapter...

***Chapter 15*: Setting the Stage**

(Char): It's about time!

(Dew): Seriously! That was NOT NICE!

I needed to convince my readers to come back SOME how...

(Char): I think you've got them more or less hooked by this point...you don't need to cliff anymore!

...I think I'm addicted to it.

(Dew): They do have a section of 'Cliffhangers Anonymous'...

...My name is Omniflyer, and I have a problem...

(Char) *casts Inferno* Not here!!

HOT!

Review Responses:

SweetSixteen5: What, you don't like collapsing mountains?

Midnight C: I hold the same amount of responsibility over your muses mauling you as you hold responsibility over people cliffhanging. Hmm... wait a minute, that makes me very responsible...

Akachi: OW!! Much pain from muses....gah, and I thought mine could be evil....

O==|=R=a=g=n=a=r=o=k= : I like cliffs too, but only when I'm writing them.

Knightblazer 88: What's wrong with me? Isn't it obvious? I'm INSANE! BWAHAHA!!

Ivan of Vault: *swatting at djinn with a flyswatter* Darn hyperactive sugar-high little things!

Dragoon Knight: Yeah, I know! ^_^

Net Strife: Evil cliffhangers? Where did you EVER get the idea I was writing those? [innocent look]

Void: Make you a deal: you tell me how you think they ended up OOC, and I'll work on fixing it.

Sagitus: I think they have eye drops for that...

EchoKazul: You know, you were the only person who wrote about the bat-cave joke. I was actually expecting a lot more for that. *shrugs* Oh, well.

Disclaimer: As previously mentioned in the last 14 chapters, I don't own Golden Sun. You know, I don't think that fact is going to change before I end this story!

Chapter 15

Setting the Stage

"Good-bye, guys!" Gareth cried over the roar of the collapse. Dirt and rocks fell from the ceiling and the ground shook, and all the while Isaac could swear he heard the faint mocking laughter of Saturos.

Dullahan reared to his full height and cried, unleashing Formina Sage. It stretched out and dug into the wall, causing the collapse to happen faster. The roar of the mountain collapsing deafened them. And suddenly...

"ENOUGH!"

...everything stopped.

The mountain stopped shaking, and the roar was silenced. The energy of Formina Sage collapsed, and everything went still.

Except for one, floating boulder-like entity, hovering in the middle of the room and emitting powerful waves of Psynergy.

"The Wise One..." Isaac whispered, holding Mia protectively from Dullahan.

"Again?" Jenna asked. "I thought he hated us..." Before anyone could answer her, the Wise One's psynergy swapped its target from the mountain to Dullahan. Suddenly, Dullahan began to shrink. Surprisingly, his power seemed to stay the same, but he diminished in size until he was just slightly larger than Gareth.

"Return my power to me!" Dullahan boomed at the Wise One, but it payed him no heed.

"What have you done?" Felix asked.

"I cannot allow an entire city's economic structure to collapse. By shrinking this so-called keeper, I can prevent the cave from collapsing," the Wise One stated. "He contains the same power he always had, but is significantly smaller."

"Doesn't that make him faster, too?" Gareth asked, but before anyone could answer, Dullahan had promptly elbowed him from behind, sending him flying into the cave wall. By the time the dust had cleared, Gareth was imprinted into the cave wall, with Jenna worrying at his side. Gareth was getting up very slowly. The Wise One chuckled.

"Maybe," he laughed, and disappeared.

"Let's get rid of Dullahan once and for all," Isaac said, drawing the Sol Blade.

Ivan and Sheba raised their staves and cast Spark Plasma. The flurry of electrical power danced around each other until it became a large, plasmatic attack, seeming to be just short of being kin to the attack released by the Bloodlust Katana. It struck Dullahan quiet painfully, but before the smoke had cleared, Dullahan was beside the two young Jupiter Adepts, dropping them with a heavy fist smash and a cry of "Formina Sage!".

Picard and Jenna fired powerful assaults from either sides of the hall. Picard let loose with a Megacool, and Jenna with a Dragon Fume. The result was a large attack that shifted the temperature from frigid cold to boiling hot in just a few moments, causing scolding steam to surround Dullahan. But

when the mist rose, all the Adepts could see was Sheba and Ivan struggling to rise from the floor, covered in dew.

Meanwhile, Dullahan started charging power for True Collide. He unleashed it on Jenna and Felix, as well as the two resident Mercury Adepts. Dullahan's increased power left them terribly weak, while the assault drained their strength and healed him. With the four of them dropping, Isaac was the only person left standing at full health. Not one to bow down, Isaac bravely brandished the Sol Blade and charged.

"Let's mix it up!" he cried. "Megiddo!" The Sol Blade glowed a bright golden shade, and conjured the familiar small meteor. Isaac smashed it toward Dullahan, but he dodged it easily and counter-attacked with a Formina Sage. Isaac twisted to avoid it and it grazed past him. Isaac leaped in the air to fall on Dullahan and slash at him vertically. Dullahan prepared his defence, but before Isaac could reach him, Isaac disappeared.

Dullahan stood still, but there was no sign of the golden-haired warrior.

"'Tis a shame," Dullahan groaned. "Let's play with the other seven..." he trailed, moving maliciously towards the other fallen Adepts.

"...Where am I...?"

Isaac picked himself up slowly off the floor. His sword was back in its scabbard, curiously enough, and he noticed that his friends were nowhere near him. In fact, he couldn't even see Dullahan. Looking around, he recognized his surroundings as a familiar city. He couldn't understand why he was here, though. He rose to his feet, and looked around

more. Then he noticed he was surrounded by a very vicious looking crowd of Lunpean soldiers. He groaned.

"Lunpa..." he trailed. Sure enough, he looked around to find himself in Lunpa. He looked around the circle of soldiers surrounding him, and reared to his full height, hand on the hilt of the Sol Blade. He turned to look behind him.

And found himself looking into very cold, shallow eyes.

"Saturos!" he yelped. "What have you done?!" Sure enough, Saturos stood before him, but was once again in the guise of Dodonpa. There were soldiers nearby to fool, after all. Some of the soldiers looked at Isaac curiously as he referred to their leader as 'Saturos', but he paid them no heed.

"I didn't think your friends would need you to beat Dullahan, small or not," he smiled. "You can spend your time here."

"Why? No!" Isaac cried. "Send me back to help them! You and I can fight after I'm sure they're safe!" Saturos merely laughed at him.

"You can check on them after I'm done with you."

Isaac didn't waste time in drawing the Sol Blade, for what felt like the hundredth time in the last few days. "Then let's do this fast," he growled. He was about to charge, regardless of the sheer numbers around him, but suddenly a thought entered his mind. Maybe it was time to end this war, after all. "I'll make you a deal, Saturos," he said, resheathing the Sol Blade. His enemy raised his eyebrows. "Let's put a few conditions on this fight. If I remember you, and I think I do, you've always been a man of your word. We make the agreement now, and then fight."

"What agreement?" Saturos asked.

"First, this war. If I win, you get Lunpa to call it off," Isaac said. Some of the soldiers blinked, but none moved.

"Agreed," Saturos smirked. "And when I win...?"

"If you win," Isaac said, "you can do whatever you want with me. Take me back to Prox as a servant forever, leave me to die somewhere, whatever," Isaac gambled, risking quite a lot on this battle.

"Deal," Saturos grinned. "I have a lot of things I can do to you," he laughed. "A lot of people in Prox still want revenge for what you did to Menardi, not to mention Karst and Agatio."

"So do we agree then?" Isaac asked. "If I win, the war's off, if you win, you get me? And no interference," he added, looking at the unruly crowd.

"Agreed. Soldiers, stay out of this," he commanded. "Let's end it," Saturos said. He raised his sword and charged, "once and for all! "

"Fine by me!" Isaac cried, and the battle joined. Sparks flew from the Sol Blade and the Bloodlust Katana as they clashed again and again. Both competitors struck again and again, neither asking nor giving the other any quarter. Isaac slashed horizontally, to which Saturos responded with a perfect block, though he stumbled a little in doing so. Then he spun the sword around and executed a perfect sweeping kick, knocking Isaac to the ground. Saturos thrust his sword point forward, but Isaac was ready for it and cast a quick Quake attack to knock Saturos off balance enough for the impalement to miss.

"So you want to use Psynergy, too?" Saturos mocked him.

"If you think you can handle it," Isaac taunted through gritted teeth, joining swords again and muscling for position with the older man. Saturos was the elder here, and had a little more muscle on him, so Isaac had to work even harder to keep up with his strength.

However, Saturos was stumbling a little more than Isaac remembered. Isaac spun behind a slash and attacked, but when Saturos blocked, he seemed to falter a little bit.

"The question is: Can you handle it?" Saturos questioned, launching a small Flare at Isaac. It set the tip of his scarf alight, and he rolled behind Saturos to put it out.

"Oh, that is it," Isaac smiled, his warrior senses starting to warm up. "Nobody messes with the scarf." Saturos openly laughed.

"And what is a weak child like you going to do about it?" Saturos asked.

"We'll see," he replied, and he leaped back at Saturos. Again, the two slashed and countered, defended and struck, all the while never leaving an opening present. The two spun and moved, appearing to be engrossed as though in some mortal dance, stepping in perfect sync with the other. Isaac began to think he could fight like this all day, but he suddenly remembered his friend struggling against Dullahan.

"Enough of this," he said. "I have places to be. Megiddo!" he cried, leaping back from Saturos and charging energy. The Sol Blade began to howl, but before Isaac could use the attack, Saturos slashed at him. His armour absorbed most of the assault, but he still took a painful stab and many deadly slashes. Isaac fell to his knees. Saturos stepped back and laughed.

"Pathetic," he mocked. "I thought you had gotten better. Oh, well. I suppose it's time to end this," he said. "With a little luck, you'll still be alive after this attack." Isaac didn't reply, he only tried to struggle back to his feet. He tried to gather enough energy to cast even a basic Cure spell, but the energy just wouldn't come to him. Meanwhile, Saturos' Bloodlust Katana grew ever darker, and finally howled its dark cry. "Now," he said, pointing it at Isaac. "Now, you die." And the weapon fired.

Isaac struggled to his feet, but there was nothing he could do, was there? He'd felt this attack before, and he'd barely managed to pull through, after many of Mia's Pure Plies, and she wasn't here any more.

Isaac thought of his friends one last time, and stared the beam down. Suddenly, the Sol Blade glowed. Isaac stared at it, but it stopped. A sudden thought struck Isaac, but did he have time? He had to try! Isaac focussed and let his friends totally fill his thoughts. The Sol Blade began to glow golden again.

Wisdom. That was what Picard had always loaned him. The wisdom of age, of experience, of guidance and help when things grew too unfamiliar and uncomfortable. Picard was the one who would always have an answer, no matter what. And that answer had always helped them before. Why not now?

Judgment. No matter what situation they had come across, they always knew that Sheba could be counted on to give them an impartial explanation. She never allowed her own feelings to cloud her judgment, even about people she had

reason to hold a grudge against, like Lord Babi. She provided stability for their group. Isaac needed that again.

Spirit. It didn't matter where they were, or what needed to be done. Jenna was always ready to give a hand or be the first person to try something new and potentially dangerous. But she had always been like that, even back to their childhood days in Vale. If they needed to do something new, there was Jenna. He needed that aspect of her now.

Partnership. After meeting atop Jupiter Lighthouse, Isaac had managed to form an alliance with Felix, and the two leaders had quite efficiently been able to form a partnership between themselves, neither trying to take too much control from the other. It was a team that had never let them down, and Isaac needed support right now.

Sentiment. If Isaac needed a gut feeling on something, he knew that Ivan could provide it. He was the one who could always give them a solution that seemed fair to everybody. He was the one who would come up with answers based on his own gut feelings and strengths. Could Ivan help him now?

Friendship. His best friend since...well, forever, actually. What more could Isaac ask for of Gareth? He was the greatest friend anyone could ask for. He was loyal, sincere, and would help Isaac out no matter what happened. No matter what, Gareth was behind him, a hundred and ten percent. There was nothing more to say about it: he could count on Gareth, across any distance.

Love. He had realized it just yesterday at the battle. Feeling Mia collapse in his arms triggered something in him he didn't quite know how to react to. It was his own dedication to her that brought her back to him, and, he realized, it would be

his dedication to her now that could give him what he needed to defeat Saturos. So Saturos had some powerful plasma beam coming at him. So what? He had Mia. He realized it; he had love, and there was nothing on Angara... no, nothing on Weyard that Saturos could throw at him to stop that. Not some beam, not Dullahan, nothing!

For a moment, it seemed as though time stood still. Isaac's power finally showed, and he glowed with a more brilliant light than even the Golden Sun itself. The beam finally struck him, but its power was nullified by the true light of Venus, and it dissipated.

"Impossible!!" Saturos cried. "How could a mere boy stop my power?!"

"Not a mere boy," Isaac replied, his eyes shining with golden power, giving him an ethereal and yet sage appearance. "You face my friends in me as well. Their power is mine. Their power is your defeat!"

"We shall see!" Saturos cried, firing the Bloodlust Katana again.

And reacting to Isaac's thoughts and his power, the Sol Blade glowed more brightly than he had ever seen it. And in the recesses of his mind, Isaac felt his new power awakening. He faced the beam down the centre, raised the Sol Blade to point right down the middle and just flew straight through it, like an arrow from a bow, sword first.

"Megiddo Rush!!" he cried, and the power of the attack split the beam in two. It split off harmlessly, shooting into the heavens.

Isaac himself shot forward and through, as though replacing the meteor of Megiddo with himself, piercing Saturos

through the chest. Miraculously (or maybe Isaac planned it?) Saturos dropped with a non-fatal wound. However, he wouldn't be rising anytime soon.

"H- how.....?" Saturos wondered, so quietly he may have mouthed it.

"You said it yourself," Isaac said, still glowing faintly. "You would weaken me by destroying my world until nothing was left. That was the only way you could beat me. You failed." Saturos smiled, an odd sight considering his weakened state.

"You cannot defeat me, Isaac of Vale," Saturos cackled. A flash of light, and he reverted to his real body, looking much healthier than he was as Dodonpa. "I will not be denied my revenge!" But even as he spoke, the soldiers began to speak.

"Where's Dodonpa?"

"What happened?"

"That's not Dodonpa!"

"Hey, buddy, where did you put Dodonpa?!" Isaac laughed as Saturos realized his folly. These soldiers thought he was Dodonpa, but when he changed...

"This whole war has been brought about by this man, impersonating your leader," Isaac informed them. The soldier's expressions almost collectively changed from confusion to pure anger. Some of the Captains and Lieutenants started shouting.

"This war is over, now!" they cried. "We will not be controlled by some outsider!!" They advanced on him, but Saturos

smirked.

"You cannot defeat me, you pitiful beings," Saturos spat at them. "Don't even try..." but as he was speaking, Isaac pointed the Sol Blade at him and enveloped him in a golden light. Saturos felt himself weakening. "What did you do to me?"

"Nothing, really. I just blocked your psynergy for awhile. And with that gone and you weakened from our fight, I think these gentlemen should be able to put you away for a very long time." The soldiers advanced on Saturos, and Isaac could actually see a look of fear in his eyes. "Don't worry, Saturos. People don't just go around killing other people. That's the job of scum like you. But I'll imagine they're going to want a few words with you." The crowd loomed closer, and just before they would take him, Saturos laughed crazily and glared at Isaac.

"Maybe I didn't defeat you, Isaac. Maybe the war is already over," he whispered. "But at least I'll still break you for my revenge. At least your friends are still being slowly killed by Dullahan." A panic surged through Isaac. How could he forget about them? He believed in them to give him the strength to beat Saturos, but could he stand losing them? How could he be so shortsighted?!

"Mia..." Isaac whispered. He let his golden light engulf him again, and used the boost in speed he received to rush toward his friends. He took off across the countryside to Altin, praying he wasn't too late.

(Char): No! How could you leave off like that again?!

(Dew): Stop hurting Isaac like this!

Hey, come on. I mean, I like Isaac, too!

(Char): Obviously not!

I mean it!

(Dew): You lie!

Geez...there's no arguing with djinn when they get like this.

(Dew): Darn right.

(Char): So hurry up and write. Now!

Ok, to the rest of you, review, please. And, yes, the end is near.

(Dew/Char): Hurrah!

***Chapter 16*: Endgame**

So this is it! The completion to my very first piece of fanfic.

(Dew): *wearing a party hat* About time, too.

(Char): *uncorking a bottle of champagne* No kidding. I thought this would never end.

...You're too kind.

(Char): I know. I mean, we haven't really beaten you for how many chapters?

(Dew): Well, I know we got him for the cliffhanger at the end of the second battle.

...I remember that.

(Char): Poor Mia. Poor Isaac, actually.

Oh, will you get over it?!

(Char): A girl needs time to grieve!

You haven't lost anything.

(Char): ...

(Dew): We lost our sanity! Why else would we still be here?

Great. Not only am I stuck with two muses, but rather two psychotic muses.

(Dew): And you couldn't get along without us! ^_^

You'd be surprised.

Review Responses:

Midnight C: Torture using water, eh? A very interesting idea... don't you hate it when I get ideas? It usually means there's a cliff coming up...

Knightblazer 88: Glad you thought the fight scene was good, because I particularly thought it was weak. I suppose even geniuses like me can be wrong on occasion! [(Dew): *stifling laughter*]

EchoKazul: No!! Not the CA!! PLEASE!

Net Strife: I was always intending to add a final chapter! No need to worry! I would never end on a cliffhanger, leaving you all in utter and total suspens...hmm...actually...

CMAK: CHIBIS!! NOOOOOO!!!

Ookami MX: I think EVERYBODY knows a muse or two that would love to beat the daylights out of me...

MercuryAdept: It's updated!

Lumino: Well, it's the end of the story, so I guess his break is here.

Ivan of Vault: Good luck with that, huh?

SweetSixteen5: Cliffhangers? Gotta love 'em...

0==|=R=a=g=n=a=r=o=k=: Yeah, it's pretty much over. I thought about making it longer, but that would involve eventually getting to a third major battle, and I thought people would get annoyed with that.

Dragoon Knight: Next chapter has come!

Disclaimer: For the last time, I don't own Golden Sun. (Huh. Last time. It sounds so...final...)

Chapter 16

Endgame

"Mommy, what's that?" asked a little girl outside Altin. She pointed up at the mountain, at a streak of Golden light that was shooting over it towards the city.

"I don't...know...honey, come inside, it might not be safe..." her mother fretted.

"But it looks so...pretty...it feels safe," she said. Her mother stared at it.

"I get the same feeling..."

"Mia..." The word echoed in his mind. How could he forget about her and the others so easily? Dullahan was still down there, beating on them, he didn't even know if they were still able to fight back. After all, when he was pulled away, he was the only one standing. What could Dullahan have done to them in such a small amount of time?

Isaac raced down the mountainside. He reached a spot just above a mine shaft entrance, leaped down, and because of the force of his speed, left a small crater in the ground. Apparently the power rush he was on from the Megiddo Rush hadn't worn off. He was still charged with power, and it showed. He felt like he had just unleashed a combination summon using at least twenty djinn of each element, and yet that didn't even begin to describe it. Isaac raced into the shaft, his own aura lighting his way. He could only pray he wasn't too late.

"Formina Sage!"

"Guuuhh...." Ivan cried, being downed with the one shot. Sheba slowly crawled over to him, hoping he was still alive. She could see his cape rise and fall with his breath, but it seemed very shallow and he didn't seem to be able to move.

"Iv-an..." Sheba groaned. "Please be okay..." Ivan started to stir.

"I couldn't... leave you here to have..." (he coughed), "...all the fun...right?" Sheba smiled.

"We'll get out of this yet," Sheba whispered.

"I promise you that," he replied.

Meanwhile, the friendly neighbourhood Lemurian was still barely on his feet, trying to defend himself as best he could from Dullahan. Gifted with long life, Picard had spent decades worth of years in his youth, training and pushing himself to his physical limits. There was only one problem with that.

Dullahan was older.

Dullahan didn't even try to slash at Picard directly, he just slammed into him with his shoulder, sending the unfortunate Mercury Adept into the cave wall. Picard tried to focus himself enough for a Megacool, but Dullahan quickly launched True Collide, and Picard slumped, unmoving.

Dullahan turned his attention next to Felix and Gareth, who were both struggling to stand. Gareth launched a Pyroclasm and Felix a Clay Spire, but as they were so weak, by the time the attacks reached Dullahan, they simply crashed to the floor before him, not even hitting him.

"Pitiful mortals," Dullahan smirked. "Ye have not even the might to oppose me, ye who hold the Sun's power."

"Can he only speak a few phrases?" Gareth tried to joke. Before anyone could answer, he and Felix found themselves in a crumpled heap on the floor beside Jenna, who had already been dispatched via Charon.

"And then there was one," Mia whispered, looking around. Leaning on her Meditation Rod for support, she rose, and tried to gain the strength to cast a Pure Wish. Dullahan didn't much care for that idea, and blasted her with Djinnsong, to remove her little Set ally's power and stop her from being able to cast the spell. Dullahan charged at her and slammed into sending her flying, much like Picard, towards the cave entrance.

Isaac heard the sounds of battle nearly from the city entrance, and had no problem finding them below. He screamed into the room like a bolt of lightning, just in time to catch Mia. She felt herself stop and looked into his eyes.

"You know," she smiled, "at this rate you're going to get the idea I don't know how to defend myself..."

"Whatever you say Mia," Isaac replied, turning her to face him directly, and kissed her. "That was for what you've given me, Mia," Isaac whispered. "And this," he said, glancing at Dullahan and kissing her more deeply, "is for what I can do to him." Mia blushed and stared at him.

"Stay alive, Isaac," she whispered. Isaac nodded, looked at her quickly and began to walk towards Dullahan, talking one last look at her.

"I love you, Mia," he said. She blushed until she was the shade of Gareth's hair.

"Enough stalling," Dullahan said.

"No more, then," Isaac replied. Dullahan began to charge energy.

"I am the shadow..."

"I am the light..." said Isaac.

"The keeper of light..."

"The slayer of shadow..."

"You who hold the sun's power..."

"You who lost the sun's power..."

"Relinquish it now!!"

"It ends now..."

Isaac charged at Dullahan and vice versa. Dullahan swung around with his arm in a mighty sweep, but Isaac deflected it with the flat of the Sol Blade. Isaac cast Quake to trip Dullahan up, but he merely leaped over Isaac to dodge and catch him on the defensive.

Not one to be caught off-guard, Isaac followed his movements, and leaped back to avoid Dullahan's leg drop. Dullahan gathered his energy and cast Formina Sage. The attack hit the Sol Blade dead on, but dissipated the moment it touched the glowing, legendary weapon. Isaac focussed his energy in the Sol Blade and conjured the all-too familiar meteor.

"Megiddo!" Isaac cried., sending the flaming rock hurtling toward his adversary Dullahan absorbed the blow, but by the time the smoke had cleared, he was on one knee.

Dullahan slowly got to his feet and sent himself towards Isaac in a mad rush, casting Formina Sage and True Collide so quickly most of the Adepts thought they were cast simultaneously. Isaac rolled to the outside of the True Collide, barely missing it, but took a grave blow from Formina Sage. He rose to his feet, though, refusing to bow to his enemy. Isaac unleashed an Odyssey attack, but Dullahan simply shrugged it off. He chased after Isaac and elbowed him in the stomach, and, thanks to his Wise One-given speed boost and size reduction, quickly pummeled Isaac with an onslaught of kicks to the back, sending him to the ground. Isaac hit the dirt, rolled and bounced to his feet again, and charged back toward Dullahan.

"At this rate, we could be down here forever," Gareth said.

"Forever's an understatement," Jenna muttered.

Isaac either didn't hear them or didn't care. He caught Dullahan in the arm with the edge of his blade, and Dullahan leaped back, leaking a black substance that Isaac could only assume was blood. Dullahan charged back with his legs out, going for a huge flurry of kicks. Isaac let the Sol Blade howl with power and swung horizontally. The Sol Blade clashed with Dullahan's legs.

The Sol Blade snapped.

The blade of the once perfect sword went spinning into the dirt behind Isaac, protruding from it as though a stick in the mud. Dullahan's flurry of kicks ended up hitting empty air as Isaac rolled behind him and slammed Dullahan onto the remnants of the Sol Blade. He landed, was impaled, and greyed out. Isaac bent to one knee and sighed. It was finally... over.

"Isaac!" Mia called, running over to him. She waited for him to stand and kissed him deeply. They broke apart slowly and she cast a very energetic Pure Ply over him, then kissed him again.

It took approximately three-one-hundredths of a second for Jenna and Gareth to say "Awwwww..."

Felix stood over the broken Sol Blade, and carefully lifted it out of the ground. The blade was dented in many places and totally snapped, unusable. "Looks like you gave it your all, this time, Isaac," he commented. "Too bad..." Isaac shrugged.

"I can always have it reforged," he smiled. "I'm just glad it's over."

"What about Saturos?" Picard asked.

"That's a long story..."

A week went by soon enough. Saturos was exposed to all as the instigator and received many punishments from leaders of the respective cities. The last Isaac had heard, Saturos was strapped to a dunking chair overlooking a small pond at Lunpa's outskirts. Lunpa began making reparations to Vault and Kalay, and discovering Dodonpa later, dead in the prison system, his son took over the rule of Lunpa.

In spare time, a huge service was held, organized between the leaders of the cities of northern Angara, to honour the fallen. The service lasted no more than an hour, but it was extremely profound and meaningful for everyone present, especially the small group of Adepts. They could do no more than express their dearest sympathies to the people who had lost friends and family, saying that they knew what it felt like.

Well, that wasn't totally true, Isaac supposed. Sure, they know what it felt like to lose someone - him - but not what it was like to have to live with that forever. They were lucky in that aspect, he supposed. Life went on.

After the service, Isaac and the others were resting up in Kalay. It was now a common sight to see Mia and Isaac hand in hand walking the streets of Kalay, and even Ivan and Sheba could be seen together on rare occasions. If you paid close attention, Garet and Jenna were shamelessly flirting with one another, but Felix had to be facing the other direction before you saw that...

Ivan and Sheba were looking particularly frazzled, however. Through all the battle and suffering, the pain of losing friends and the joy of getting them back, one thought still seemed to worry them. The group was resting in Ivan's Kalay residence when the others decided to see what was bothering him.

"What's wrong, Ivan?" Picard asked. Ivan frowned.

"Where's Master Hammet?" Ivan asked, to no one in particular. Isaac nearly knocked himself down after slapping his forehead so hard.

"We totally forgot about him! Ivan, I'm so sorry..."

"It's not your fault..." he trailed.

"Maybe Master Hammet's on his way back here now?" Jenna posed. "Now that it's safe again, he could be coming back right now."

"And maybe he's already arrived," said the voice of Master Hammet from behind them.

"Master Hammet!" Ivan yelped, surprised by the sudden re-appearance.

"You're okay!" Sheba exclaimed.

"Well, of course I am!" Master Hammet said. "I can take care of myself, you know!"

"But I thought... with Dodon... I mean Saturos and the war, and..." Gareth stuttered.

"Oh, no need to worry about that, I was adequately taken care of, I can assure you," Hammet smiled.

"By whom?" Felix asked.

"By me," said a figure, strolling up from farther behind Hammet.

"Kraden?!" the Adepts exclaimed.

"You've been with Kraden all this time?!" Ivan asked incredulously.

"Of course," Hammet replied. "I needed a place to stay, and Kraden was moving up to the peak of Mount. Aleph for awhile. It was the perfect getaway. Quite a lovely view, as well."

"But who took your stuff up to the top of the mountain?" Gareth asked.

"Why, I believe you did, Gareth," Kraden answered. "I hid all of his items in a box marked 'Pheonix Feathers'. No one would expect to find items related to near royalty in a simple alchemical student's chemical boxes such as my own. Of course, it was a rather ingenious plan, if you ask me..."

"I TOLD you those boxes were too heavy to be feathers!" Gareth shouted with a triumphant look at Isaac. Isaac rolled his eyes, and the group promptly began laughing, except for Kraden, of course, who was still talking.

"...elements in the fusion of the Golden Sun seem to have formed a quite lovely view over the peak of Mount. Aleph. Indeed, at dusk, if Sol hits it just right, it almost appears to mark something in the ground. Of course, I thought this was just superstition at first, but then I..." and so on. Gareth rolled his eyes.

"Quack," he said under his breath to the other Adepts. The room was overtaken by laughter again.

"Why was that so funny?" Ivan asked.

"I'm not sure," Mia said. "I suppose we're all in a good mood today. For once," she smiled taking Isaac's hand, "everything seems to be perfect."

"I agree," he said.

"You know, I still wonder how Isaac managed to focus that much psynergy when he fought Dullahan," Sheba wondered. "I mean, he was positively glowing!" At this, Kraden stopped his explanations and rambling and focussed entirely on Isaac.

"Glowing, you say? With psynergy? You simply must tell me everything that happened!" he said.

"Thanks, Sheba," Isaac muttered. Sheba giggled, and the group launched into a long explanation of the events on the mountain. When it was over, Kraden paused and formulated his best hypothesis.

"I would suppose that when you were all atop Mars Lighthouse when it was lit and the Golden Sun rose, you were all exposed to extreme concentrations of Psynergetical power."

"You already told us that," Felix said.

"Yes, but I think Isaac has 'tapped into' that power and learned to harness it. It's the only way he could become so strong that fast," Kraden said. Isaac thought back to Lunpa and his final battle with Saturos and how he achieved that power, and looked around at the sources of it. He smiled.

"Maybe not the only way..."

Isaac sat atop the highest point of Hammet's castle, overlooking the direction of Vale and the Golden Sun. He reflected upon the events of the last little while. Actually, he had been doing that for the last hour. By this point Picard would be telling him not to waste his short life, and Felix would tell him to stop trying to be so philosophical all the time. Ivan and Sheba would say that thinking was their job, and Jenna and Gareth would just say to come down and enjoy life again. Mia...well she might join him in the solitude, actually. Might be worth checking.

And on cue, Mia appeared behind him, coming up from downstairs.

"What are you thinking about, Isaac?" she asked him, joining him at the window. Isaac paused before answering.

"It's been a long couple of weeks..."

"I know what you mean," she said. "What are you going to do now?"

"I thought might head back to Bilibin," he replied. "There's a lot of work to be done there." Isaac looked contemplatively out the window. "I wonder how many of the others would come with me...?" Mia smiled and took his hand.

"One, at least."

Mia leaned forward and kissed him. Finally, after the anarchy and death that they had seen so much of over the last few days, he could relax and enjoy the moment. He could take his time getting to Bilibin, he could take his time returning

home, he could even take his time waiting for Garet to finish lunch.

But most importantly, he could take his time now and enjoy it, with Mia, alone and at peace. He kissed her again, and the couple enjoyed the setting twilight, lit only by Luna, and the faint, distant light of the Golden Sun.

(Dew): HOORAY!

(Char): Conga line!!

(Dew/Char): This dumb fic is done NOW... This dumb fic is done NOW...

I didn't think it was that bad!

(Dew/Char): *still conga-ing* That's 'cause you're a mo-RON... That's 'cause you're a mo-RON...

...You have a conga chant for everything! How long have you been planning that conga line?

(Dew/Char): *you guessed it* Original chap-TER... Original chap-TER...

Moving right along...

That's the end of my first ever fanfiction...actually, my first ever story! ...Okay, fine, first ever plot. I'd like to thank everyone who's helped me in some way to create this story.

Firstly, that means some targeted thanks. Many thanks go to:

Sweetsixteen5 and Ivan of Vault, for never ceasing to threaten my bodily health (especially in Law Class) whenever I cliff, and possibly convincing me to write even more than my muses.

Secondly, to other authors on fanfiction.net, including, but not limited to: Midnight C, Triad Orion, Griffinkhan, Akiko and Elena. Your stories have covered a wide array of emotions in me, from serious and touching to downright hilarious and overall something great to look forward to week in and week out. I humbly thank you all for writing and continuing to write such great stories. Special thanks also to Midnight C for being a dedicated and 'consistant' reviewer since the early chapters. (Incidentally, to anyone who hates me for cliffhanging, it's partly her you can blame, as she has indirectly taught this annoying and yet addictive skill to me.)

And finally, I wish to thank every person who has reviewed this story at any point. More often than not, your reviews have been insightful, humourous and something I would look forward to reading after each chapter I posted, almost as much as I liked writing the chapters themselves. To everyone who reviewed, thank you.

Having said all that, it is time for me to close this. If you decide to review this last chapter, please include at the very least an opinion on my writing of at least one of the following styles of scenes, each of which I personally thought were rather weak: 1) Fight scenes, 2) Sad scenes and 3) Romantic scenes. Your opinions would be greatly appreciated and usable if I decide to write another story.

(Dew/Char): *halting the line* MORE WRITING?!

^_^;; Again, thank you to the above people and my reviewers. It's been a blast. See you around.